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COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 2175.

ONE TRAMP; MRS. MAYBURN'S TWINS
BY
JOHN HABBERTON.

IN ONE VOLUME.

LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

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By the same Author,

HELEN'S BABIES AND OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN 1 vol.
THE BOWSHAM PUZZLE . . . . . 1 vol.

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AUTHOR OF "HELEN'S BABIES," ETC. ETC.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1883.

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ONE TRAMP.

ONE TRAMP.

CHAPTER I.

THE HERO.

"There he is!" exclaimed a lady at Mrs. Malleson's reception, interrupting an interesting description which a younger lady was giving of a bride's trousseau she had seen.

"He? Whom do you mean?" asked the lady addressed.

"Whom? Why, whom did we all come here, in spite of the terrible weather, to see?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said the younger lady, her pretty eyes and mouth opening wider, for wonder.

"Innocent child!" said the more experienced damsel—she had known twenty-two summers, "it is Fred Valtrey, only son of old Prosper Valtrey, the rich iron merchant;—that is he,—the jolly old gentleman with the bald head and reddish gray whiskers, bowing to Mrs. Malleson; she is an old flame

of his, they say. Now he's introducing his son. Oh! isn't he just splendid?"

"He is a very pleasant looking old gentleman," said the younger lady.

"Old? Why, I do believe you thought I meant the father! Nonsense! I meant Fred, the father's darling, the father's only possible heir; Fred, the great catch, who was sent off to Europe as soon as he graduated and before anyone could catch him; Fred, who is handsome, flirts divinely, can sketch, play the piano, write poetry, and will some day inherit a million dollars; Fred, whose father has cruelly kept him abroad three long years, yet talked of him all the while to every one who would listen. My! Won't girls and managing mammas fight over him! And won't they have their labor for their pains if his father plays Cerberus as he used to do before the boy was of age? Oh, see! Mrs. Malleson has taken his arm and is bringing him this way—she is introducing him to the guests. They will reach us in a moment or two—do try to look your prettiest, now, and perhaps you may catch him. There's no hope for me, you know; I'm engaged; but if I wasn't—"

The spirited chatter ended suddenly, for the hostess approached with the lion of the evening and said:

"Ladies, let me introduce Mr. Frederic Valtrey. Mr. Valtrey, Miss Margaret Terraine—Miss Wynne."

The young man bowed; Miss Terraine offered her hand and a bright smile, saying:

"You scarcely need an introduction to an old schoolmate, Mr. Valtrey. Just think, Ethel, dear, we were in the same class at school—oh, ever so many years ago. You wouldn't imagine Mr. Valtrey nearly as young as I, would you?"

Valtrey turned his handsome face inquiringly toward Miss Wynne, who, not having acquired as much composure as her companion, blushed and looked the prettier for it in spite of the confusion that prevented her replying at all. Valtrey hurried to her rescue by saying:

"Don't try to make Miss Wynne believe I am not of age, Lady Margaret. You see I don't forget what we used to call you. Miss Wynne, your friend was distinguished for her beauty and manners, even before she went into long dresses."

"Don't waste compliments on me, Fred," said Miss Terraine: "I'm not worth them: I'm engaged."

"Oh, shocking!" exclaimed Fred, assuming an expression of horror; "what is to become of me? Is everyone engaged?"

"No, indeed," said Miss Terraine, and then with a mischievous look she added "Ethel is not."

Then Fred looked at Ethel again, bowed, and placed his hand on his heart, while Ethel blushed more deeply than before and Mrs. Malleson exclaimed—

"Come along, you dreadful boy; do you dare to begin lovemaking before all my guests have met you?"

"Margie, Margie," whispered Ethel, as the hostess led Fred away, "how could you?"

"How?" replied Miss Terraine with a laugh, "Why, as easily as breathe; and I do believe it did some good, for he is looking back at you now. Turn your eyes toward him—quick!"

"Not for a million worlds!" said Ethel, burying her face in a bouquet.

As Master Fred made the tour of the parlors, his father, from the center of a knot of people not too old to be called middle-aged, viewed the young man's progress with intense satisfaction. Fred was his only son and his all, for Mrs. Valtrey, from whom the boy inherited good looks and refining tendencies, had died some years before and left no other child. Her husband had tried to be both father and mother to the boy, and having put much love into the work he succeeded quite well. While Fred was at college his father watched him closely, and had much to do with the selection of his associates. When he graduated his father sent him to Europe to complete his education and see something of the world, so that when he should become a business man he would not dwindle into a mere money-making machine; he was accompanied by an older student, who was really a mentor and guardian, selected by Fred's father.

And everything had seemed to result as the father desired, but as the old gentleman's keen eyes followed the boy among Mrs. Malleson's guests, among whom were as fair a proportion and variety of intelligent people as could be found at any private reception, they saw that Fred was making a favorable impression upon all, except, perhaps, a few solid old business men like Prosper Valtrey himself. But the stolidity of these did not affect the general result in the father's mind; it merely indicated that Fred was above their comprehension, as the old gentleman had intended it should be.

Mr. Valtrey fell into a pleasant reverie, from which he was finally aroused by the voice of the hostess saying:

"A penny for your thoughts, old friend. But never mind—I have them without paying for them: they are all about Fred."

"You're right, as usual, Marian," said the old man, "and of course you know just what I think of him. And I'll warrant you agree with me. Come now, tell me the truth."

"I'm afraid to," said the lady; "'twould make you conceited. You fathers have a way of claiming all the credit for what your sons are. To tell the truth, I think he is more like his mother than you."

"God bless him, I hope so," said the old gentleman heartily.

"If he lacks anything," continued the lady, "it

is the sturdy manliness that has made his father respected by every one."

"You wouldn't have him show sturdiness in a parlor, would you—not in your parlor?"

"I'm afraid you don't understand me, Prosper. Isn't it possible you have made life easier for him than it should be for a boy? You've given him everything he has wanted."

"Certainly I have; hardships will come to him soon enough, when he goes into business. There's no easy path in business, Marian; taking care of property, to say nothing of increasing it, is the hardest drudgery in the world; the more a man owns, the more annoyances and disappointments he is sure to have. Why, my dear girl, I have to lose my temper twenty times as often as the cheapest laborer in my warehouse, and Fred will have to do it, too, when he goes into business with me. Thank the Lord, the dear boy will have a father to shield him from some of the torments of a business man."

"And in that very way to keep his character from becoming strong. But see—he isn't in danger of any torments, just now, is he?"

The old gentleman looked about quickly, and saw Fred slowly coming up the room with Ethel Wynne on his arm. The father's eyes twinkled as he exclaimed:

"The young rogue! If I were a girl, and he

looked at me in that style, I'd fall in love with him at once."

"That's what Ethel will do, I suspect," said Mrs. Malleson, "and unless Fred is a great goose he will make haste to return the compliment."

"Eh!" exclaimed Valtrey, "who is she?"

"Ethel Wynne, daughter of a very dear old friend of mine. And she is the sweetest, purest, most sensible girl I ever knew in my life—except Fred's mother."

"Thank you, Marian," said the old gentleman, scarcely louder than a whisper, as he pressed his friend's hand for an instant. "Has she money?"

"Not a penny. Her mother has a little estate in Ohio, left her by her husband; it supports mother and daughter, fairly, but no more."

"Good! Heaven save my son from an heiress! Is she educated—has she good tastes?"

"She is everything that a girl of 19 can be, and she's far too good for any young man of my acquaintance, not excepting your son Fred."

"Nonsense!" said the old gentleman. "I suppose you women would like somebody to import a cargo of male angels to marry to your pet girls. A young woman who is too good for my son—"

"Now, Prosper," interrupted Mrs. Malleson, "don't talk about things you don't understand. If you had a daughter of your own you would know all about it. As for Ethel Wynne, here she is, within

a step or two of us; let me introduce you, so that the father may save the son. If you weren't the sensible man that you are, I wouldn't trust the girl with you for ten minutes, for you would want to make her Fred's stepmother. Ehm—Ethel, dear, let me introduce to you a very dear old friend of mine, Mr. Prosper Valtrey."

"My father," explained Fred to Ethel.

The old gentleman made a profound bow, and then said:

"Fred, you're altogether too selfish; it's a father's duty to discourage such propensities. Won't you exchange a young man's arm for an older one, Miss Wynne?"

Ethel smiled, and placed her little hand on the large arm which the old gentleman obligingly bent to an acute angle; as the couple walked away Mrs. Malleson laughed and said to Fred:

"The Valtrey family seem to be monopolizing Ethel this evening."

"They'll do so forever," said Fred, looking after the retreating couple, "if I can have my way."

"Why, you rash boy! You never saw her until half an hour ago."

"I am sorry to say you are right," said Fred, following with his eyes the retreating couple, "and yet I think I've already been jealous of father at least a dozen half hours."

"Spare yourself the trouble; the girl can never

meet a better man than your father; he is one of the few men alive who adore women for women's own sake."

"Then his heart will be very busy while he has that little saint on his arm. Mrs. Malleson, you are an old friend of our family; tell me honestly if there is any reason why I can not win her?"

Although Mrs. Malleson knew women well enough to believe that Ethel Wynne could not long resist Frederic Valtrey, she determined to prevaricate for the sake of her friend's daughter, so she said:

"I do not, if you are willing to be as good a husband as your father was. He never ceased to unmake and remake himself for the sake of his wife, just as every true woman does for her husband."

Fred's face sobered almost to a frown; he had spoken of love and the reply had been about duty. But he recovered his good nature by looking down the room at Ethel and answered:

"I am willing to be anything to secure such an angel. Will you excuse me a moment? I really think it is time to take her away from father."

"What will people say?" said Mrs. Malleson, placing her hand on his arm. "You've already paid her enough attention, at first acquaintance, to get everyone talking and make the poor child uncomfortable. Restrain your ardor, and I will arrange for you to escort her home when she is ready

to go. She and her mother board within two or three squares of us."

"Would that the squares were two or three thousand, and she wanted to start at once," sighed Fred. "There! father is sitting down with her; that means a long talk."

Mrs. Malleson laughed and turned to another guest, while Fred recovered his manners as he realized anew that he was the lion of the evening. But he did not fail to be ready to act Miss Wynne's escort, and after he departed his father waited long for him to return and finally went home alone.

CHAPTER II.

AS USUAL.

When Fred saw a very solid door shut Ethel Wynne's pretty face from his view he started briskly back to the reception to join his father. As he crossed an avenue a plainly-dressed young woman accosted him, and as previous experience of the same kind did not harmonize with the feeling of which his heart was full he attempted to quicken his steps, but the woman followed him, saying:

"Won't you please listen to me, just for a moment?"

Determining that he had misjudged, Fred stopped.

"I have lost my situation," said the woman. "We working girls that have come from other towns

have no friends to go to when we are in trouble. I am afraid to go to where I have boarded, for they told me not to come back unless I brought the money I owed them. I've nothing that I can sell, nothing that I can pawn, and I am cold and hungry, I never begged before, but won't you give me a little money?"

"Lost situation? no home? cold? hungry?" exclaimed Fred. "You've spoken to the right man, my poor girl. No woman shall suffer, on this night of all nights, if I can help it. Come with me—take my arm. I wonder if any restaurants are open at this hour? Ah, there's a policeman; we'll ask him."

The officer looked at the girl, who was not uncomely, winked knowingly at Fred, and directed him to a house which he assured him was as quiet a place as a gentleman could want to take a lady to.

"I am very glad you met me," said Fred, as he led the girl rapidly along.

"So am I," said she, "for I do believe I should have thrown myself into the river before long. I was utterly desperate; it is bad enough to be homeless and friendless, without being insulted and abused and laughed at, as I have been to-night."

"Poor child!" said Fred with genuine feeling; "cast all that out of your mind now; you shan't have any more trouble. Here we are; come in."

"Room, sir?" said an attendant, as the couple entered the house.

"Eh? yes, certainly, you don't want to be stared at, my poor girl, by the mixed crowd that is here. And," continued Fred, slipping a half-dollar into the attendant's hand, "send up right away the nicest supper you can; no delay, now."

"All right, sir," said the waiter, ushering the couple into a small room. Oysters, ale, chops and game were served in quick succession, and Fred delicately assumed extreme hunger, so that his companion might not be ashamed to eat. But as he ate he looked at the girl before him. It seemed to him, and rightly, that she might have been a lady if fate had been more kindly disposed toward her, for she had good features and an honest face with no coarseness in it. The needed food, the warmth that radiated from a glowing grate, the ale that Fred forced upon her, all combined to tint her cheek a little and brighten her eye. Either naturally, or through the influence of the kindness she was receiving, her manner became ladylike, until Fred experienced positive pleasure in looking at her and listening to her voice. Finally, when Fred attempted to order the table replenished, the girl protested that she could eat no more.

"Then," said Fred, "let me move your chair in front of the fire, and talk with you, and try to help you out of your troubles; I know I can do it."

"I am too poor to be proud; I will take help even from a stranger," replied the girl.

"What has your work been?"

"Making paper boxes."

"How much did you earn?"

"Four dollars and a half a week, and paid $4 for my board. One cannot save much money out of half a dollar a week."

"Dreadful! dreadful!" exclaimed Fred, rising and pacing the floor in extreme indignation; "these heartless employers are more cruel than the old slave-holders. Humanity is nothing to them, Miss——, I beg your pardon—"

"Laythrow—Annie Laythrow," said the girl.

"Thanks. Miss Laythrow, I think the Southerner who gave his slaves a roof to cover them and food to eat was a saint compared with these Northern brutes who grind defenseless women down to the last penny and let them consume their lives on the base altar of a soulless employer's greed."

"I am glad to hear a man say so; I have often said it myself," said the girl, and then, as past experiences came trooping through her mind, she burst into tears.

"Poor child! Poor child!" said Fred, approaching her chair, leaning tenderly over her, and finally resting a hand on her rather shapely head. The girl seemed to shrink a little from his touch, but as she said nothing, Fred gently smoothed her hair as

he spoke many sympathetic words. Finally, the girl rallied herself and exclaimed:

"I am ashamed of myself for breaking down so completely; but it has been a long time since any man has spoken kindly to me. My father is dead; I have no brothers."

"Then let me be brother to you," said Fred, "just for the sake of making you feel less desolate in the world."

The girl looked at Fred rather coldly, but saw only a face with as honest an expression as any face ever wore. She said "thank you" and turned her face a little, while Fred, looking at her, wished that Ethel were already his, so he could send her this girl as a maid. He determined he would not lose sight of Annie Laythrow; he might yet help her by giving her to Ethel Wynne. Then it occurred to him that the girl, who did not seem entirely at ease, had told him she was homeless. He roused himself at once from reverie, looked at his watch, and exclaimed:

"Bless me, it is after one o'clock. Let me see you to your home; I will give you money to soften the heart of your landlady."

"I shall have to go somewhere else," said the girl; "Mrs. Brown will not let any one in after ten o'clock.

"The old brute!" exclaimed Fred; "Then I will get you a room at a hotel."

The girl seemed more and more embarrassed; finally she said:

"I am very shabbily dressed. I am afraid you might have trouble."

"We'll fix it some way," said Fred, realizing that he himself might be subjected to considerable annoyance if he were to appear at a hotel with a lady and without baggage. He summoned the waiter, and asked him if there was no respectable boarding-house in the neighborhood in which a lady could pass the night. The waiter looked at the girl, looked at Fred, and finally said he did not know.

"Then," said Fred, "if you are not afraid to sit here for three or four hours I'll keep you company and help you plan your future. Or, how stupid of me not to think of it before!—I'll take you to my own home; my father will be glad to receive any one I bring to him. What say you?"

The girl hesitated; she was confused by all that had happened and all that was suggested. At last Fred said:

"Sit down a moment, until you can determine. It is pleasanter here than out of doors."

So they fell to talking again, and Fred ordered more refreshments, and asked about the varieties of woman's work, and what paid best, and, learning that there were stores where good positions could be procured by bribing certain persons in authority,

he gave the girl, then and there, money with which to secure a good place, upon which the grateful, bewildered creature had to cry again, and Fred had to console her. Time flew rapidly after that; Fred talked brilliantly, confidentially, tenderly, and the girl, who had never met such a man before, was so overcome by wonder, gratitude, weariness and the strangeness of all that had happened so suddenly that she listened passively, half imagining that all was a dream.

When next Fred looked at his watch he was startled to find it was six o'clock. He went to the window and as he turned the slats of the inner blinds he saw the houses opposite in the light of the gray dawn. He roused the girl, who had fallen into a dose on a lounge that Fred had drawn in front of the dying fire. She rubbed her eyes, opened them in a dazed way, and closed them again.

"Annie?—little Annie," whispered Fred, "it is daylight. We ought to go away from here before the streets fill with people."

The girl arose quickly, looked around her, seized her shabby hat and cloak and put them on, while Fred hurried on his overcoat and hat, and said:

"Now, Annie, let us go out one at a time. You go straight home, pacify your landlady, sleep all morning and get a better dress this afternoon be-

fore you look for the new situation. Here is some more money. Get a good warm cloak, you poor child. I will write you this very day, so you will get the letter in the morning. We will meet again very soon. You'll not be afraid to go home alone, will you?—it's broad daylight, you know."

"No," said the girl, "except I wish I never had been born."

"I'll persuade you to change that wish," said Fred tenderly, taking the girl in his arms and kissing her repeatedly. "Now we must hurry away."

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER RECEPTION.

"FRED," said Valtrey, senior, as his son came down to breakfast on the morning after Mrs. Malleson's reception, as cheerily as if he had been asleep in his room all night, instead of only two hours, "I want to ask you a serious question."

"What? before I've had a mouthful of food?" asked Fred, trying to conceal some uneasiness of mind.

"Yes, and before you have a single sip of coffee. It is this; is it considered good manners in Europe for a young man, escorting a lady to her home late at night, to impose himself upon her good nature for an extra hour or more?"

"Why, father," said Fred, feeling much easier at once, "I—"

"Is it considered good manners, I say," interrupted the old man, "particularly when the youngster leaves an old father to await his return and wear out the patience of a tired hostess?"

"Really, father, I didn't think—"

The old gentleman brought the reply to an untimely end by a laugh so hearty that everything in the room seemed to rattle in sympathy. Then he shook his head knowingly and smiled profoundly, and winked, and laughed again, until Fred, who was quick to enter into the spirit of anyone with whom he happened to be, laughed as heartily as his father. Finally the father said:

"I suppose you think your heart is entirely gone?"

"Yes, sir," said Fred, wondering in exactly what proportions he had divided his seat of affection between Ethel and Annie.

"You deserve credit for your good taste, you young rogue," said the old man, pushing back his chair and sitting at ease, "but don't you think you've begun too rapidly?"

Fred said "yes" to himself, and rapidly cursed the fate that compelled him to play hypocrite to the father whom he adored, but aloud he answered quickly and cheerily:

"Not at all."

"You are sure you love her?"

"Very."

"No possibility of a mere violent fancy?"

"None whatever."

"Try to imagine her old and ugly, as she must be one of these days."

"I can't."

"Imagine her face pitted with small-pox."

"That would make no difference."

"She's as poor as a churchmouse."

"I'm glad of it; I despise a man who wants to marry money."

"Good boy!" exclaimed the father. "Now tell me just one thing more. You looked bright and merry when you came into the room ten minutes ago, now you're as solemn as a judge; what's the matter? Do you think you have a rival?"

Fred forced a laugh. "I haven't thought of such a possibility," said he.

"Nor I, but what——. Fred," said the old man rising suddenly, going around to his son, and placing his hand on the young man's shoulder, "Fred, perhaps Miss Wynne has a rival?"

Fred hastily raised a piece of meat to his mouth.

"Have you been making love abroad, and not taking your father into your confidence—your old, loving father, whom you know you can talk to freely about anything? I asked you if Ethel—bless the sweet girl, I've been imagining her my daughter

already—I asked you if she had a rival. Why don't you answer me?"

"Because it's impolite to speak when one's mouth is full," said Fred, taking a sip of coffee. "Father," he continued, "upon my honor there's no woman in all Europe who has the slightest claim to me. I've imagined myself in love a great many times, but always found out I was mistaken. I never should have proposed to anyone without asking your consent."

"Good boy—good boy!" said the old man. "You'd have broken my heart if you had, Fred, or if you got into any of the scrapes that some young men consider the proper thing in Europe. But tell me a little more; I'm your father, you know—did you propose last night? You certainly had time enough."

Fred's face twitched in many unusual ways; the old man looked wonderingly into it, and finally exclaimed:

"Fred, she didn't reject you, did she? I'm afraid you've been too rash."

"No, father, no," said Fred with some impatience, and half determining to tell the whole truth and appeal to his father for pity and advice. "I didn't propose; how could you imagine me in such indecent haste? I didn't propose, and I'm not sure that I will. I don't think I'm good enough for her."

"Stick to that, my boy; stick to that," said the

old man, patting his son on the head, "it shows the proper spirit. None of us are good enough for good women, but so long as we believe it ourselves none of them will find it out. And so you sat there for an hour or more, just looking at that angelic little creature, and unable to tear yourself away? In this big city, full of all sorts of wickedness, my darling son, who is as full of life and spirit as any one else, was lucky enough and pure enough to give himself up completely to the influence of a gentle, honest, simple, sweet little saint of a woman! While other fellows of his age were roystering and throwing away their manliness, my noble hearted boy was—"

"Stop, father, for Heaven's sake!" exclaimed Fred so impatiently that his father started back in astonishment, while the young man rapidly coined a lie.

"Don't make a sweet little saint of me too. I merely saw Miss Wynne home; I did not even step inside the door. As I was returning for you, a fire engine came along, and as the air was very cold and bracing, and I felt like having a run, I did what I sometimes did when I was a bad little boy; —I ran to afire."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the old man; "So you're a boy still? Well, don't stop being one; don't shrink into the style of galvanized mummy that so many of our young men are nowadays. But, to come back to a more interesting subject, I admire Ethel Wynne

as much as you do, and if you can persuade her to become Mrs. Valtrey—eh, how does that sound?—If you can persuade her to become Mrs. Valtrey you will make me the happiest man alive. I'm so glad you haven't any other woman in your mind; a young man who falls in love with a girl like Ethel Wynne should be able to give away his whole heart from the start."

"Father," exclaimed Fred, with an agony of appeal which his father regarded as a capital bit of acting, "let's change the subject for a little while. I—don't you imagine that a young man is ever bashful—just a little bit bashful, about such things at first?"

"Well, well, he shan't be teased," said the old man tenderly, as if talking to a baby. "But come down to the store with me, won't you? You've been back from Europe nearly three whole days, and all the clerks and workmen who knew you as a boy are growing jealous. I want you to keep on the right side of all our employés just as I have done."

As father and son rode down town together, Fred's conflicting thoughts tormented him so incessantly that he looked absent-minded and stared blankly through the carriage window, while his father, attributing all to thoughts of Ethel, smiled benignantly and thanked Heaven devoutly that his only son had so early and wisely made his choice among women. As the carriage stopped in front of

the store the old man sighed that his happy reverie was broken, but Fred experienced a sensation of relief, for now his wretchedness would be banished, for a few moments at least, by the exchanges of recognition with the score of employés who had known him as a romping boy. Every one in the establishment had been on watch for two days, and as Fred entered the door of the counting-room the men from the warehouse crowded in from the back door and, with all the clerks, responded to the proposal of big Pat Kaddow, his father's oldest employé:

"Three cheers for little Fred!"

Fred's face brightened gloriously in an instant; his hat flew to the ceiling, and, shouting, "Here we are again!" he rushed into the crowd with both hands extended to exchange hearty grips with all, while his father looked on and assured himself that he was the happiest old man in the universe.

"I want you all to take dinner with me to-day, boys," said Fred as the men began to return to their work; "will you allow them, father?"

"Allow them yourself if you like," said the old man; "you're equal partner and ruler here from this very morning."

"Three cheers for the new partner!" shouted Phil Royal, the bookkeeper.

"Bless you, Phil," exclaimed Fred, when the cheering had subsided and the workmen dis-

appeared, "you look just the same as ever, old Steadybones."

"Drop the 'old,' if you please, Fred," said Phil; "I'm only four years older than you, and you're only twenty-two, you know."

"True enough, but anyone would imagine from your steady ways and sober face that you were fifty. You need to go abroad and freshen yourself up, and I'm going to send you over, too."

"I suppose I'm not to be consulted in the matter," said the old man.

"No," said Fred, with a laugh, "you've had your chance to give Phil a rest and you haven't improved it. I'm going to atone for all your sins to your employés. Are you married yet, Phil?"

The young bookkeeper's pale face reddened as he shook his head.

"What Fred really wants to ask, Royal," said the old man, with a merry wink, "is whether you are in love."

"No," said Royal, "not even in love yet."

"Fred would like to say he pities you," said the old gentleman, "but I suppose he's a little bit afraid to do so before witnesses."

Fred's face sobered suddenly, and his father hastily called himself an old fool and turned to his letters, while the son went hastily into the warehouse to treat himself to some very bad names. Then he went around among the workmen, chatting with

them as freely as in old times, emptying his cigar-case among the smokers and leaving them with a promise to meet them all, two or three hours later, at as good a dinner as money could buy.

When he returned to the office he was glad to see that his father was not there, for he was impatient to write his promised letter to Annie Laythrow, though what to write he could not determine. He seized a pen and sheet of paper and began with "Dear Annie," when, noticing that the paper bore his father's name and business address he hastily tore it into very small pieces. The girl did not know his name; she had not asked it until he had reasons for wanting to conceal it from her, and he was equally determined that it would be dangerous to give her any clue to his whereabouts.

He hastily left the office, bought some plain stationery, went to a hotel and secured a room, in which he locked himself. Then he began to write rapidly, but he tore letter after letter in his inability to reconcile his feelings and his fears. Finally he dropped his pen, paced the room and fought his conscience with the entire success that always crowns such efforts. He told himself that Annie, poor, friendless and homeless, would inevitably have reached the usual fate of such girls, and that it was lucky for her that she had fallen into his hands instead of those of some low brute or heartless lounger. He would be kind to her; he

begged Heaven to hear his vow that he would shield her from all harm. To marry her would be out of the question; she did not belong on his social level, and yet he could not help loving her, after a fashion. He knew men in Europe who seemed to be husbands to happy wives, yet maintained close relations with other women; if anyone could do so, why not he, to whom all women were adorable?

He finally wrote the girl a tender, self-accusing yet non-committal letter, enclosing some money, and begging her to look upon him as her loyal friend for life. He also made an appointment for an early meeting, out of doors, and then, by no means as satisfied with himself as he had expected to be after so much effort, he hurried away to make arrangements for the promised dinner.

CHAPTER IV.

DUCKS, DRAKES AND WILD OATS.

WHILE the younger member of the firm of Valtrey & Son had been a boy in college and enjoyed but a small allowance of spending money, he had wondered and determined what he would do when he became a man and rich. Now that he had reached his majority and an even half of his father's annual income, he made realities of the dreams of his childhood. Chaynter, an old class-

mate, who at college had been chronically impecunious and remained so ever since, found him out and went away with a comfortable sum of money in his pocket. Thayre, a divinity student, who had since failed in the ministry and started a school, was also gladdened in heart and pocket. The janitor of the boat club to which Fred had belonged wanted to start a bar-room, and, although Fred felt sure that the fellow would sell only bad liquor, he kindly loaned him the necessary capital. He sent small sums of money to persons named in the newspapers as being destitute, set bright newsboys up in shops of their own; and when big Pat Kaddow, at the warehouse, was one day bemoaning his inability to give his eldest daughter the education she deserved, Fred enabled Pat to send the girl to a New England boarding-school, kept by an old ex-minister who was a life-long friend of his father. His expenses were also increased by diversions at two or three clubs he had joined.

Valtrey senior, who watched his son closely, determined that although the young man was wasting money at a frightful rate, there was no better way in which to educate him in the facts and falsities of benevolence; as for the money itself, the firm could stand it. But when one day Fred subscribed nearly all the stock in a little gold mine that an old classmate was trying to work, the head of the firm thought the time to draw the line had come,

so he declared that Fred was drawing money at a more rapid rate than the firm was earning it.

Fred was shocked and not a little hurt at his father's subsequent implication that he was throwing money away. He promised to be more careful, however, and he kept his word to the extent of giving only half as much as was asked or seemed necessary in any particular case, but to say "no" was a duty to which he never was equal; the nearest approach to it that he could make was sometimes to lend his indorsement when money itself was asked for.

Almost the only one of his acquaintances who did not appeal to him for money was Annie Laythrow; she not only asked for none, but she declined it when offered. With the money first given her by Fred she had bribed her way into the establishment of a modiste, where her nimble fingers and correct taste soon secured her good wages. Fred visited her often, sometimes with the intention of bidding her goodbye, and forever, sometimes determined to make the only honorable atonement for his fault, occasionally to try to purchase a release from the claim he felt she had upon him, but each time his resolution failed him. It was impossible not to see that the girl loved him dearly and purely; it was equally evident that, glad as she always was to see him, she was not happy, and that she felt the need of rights that Fred was not ready to grant. Her trouble and perplexity gave her face a mixture

of sweetness and sadness that stung Fred to the heart and yet made him admire her more than before; it also assured him that nothing his money might do could ever satisfy her for lack of justice.

And all the while Fred was sure he loved Ethel also. Some days a sense of his unworthiness tormented him so severely that he would forswear going to parties or receptions where the young lady was likely to be, but he always broke his oath just before the opportunity to see her had passed. His father's desire to have Ethel for a daughter-in-law urged him on at times; again, he would try to persuade himself that his father would be satisfied with Annie, could he see her womanly, appealing face and know the truth, which Fred dared not tell.

But opportunity, of which Fred was the utterly helpless creature, threw him and Ethel together one delightful evening in early summer. The girl had attached to Fred's frequent visits and other attentions the meaning that any other woman would have done; she had been told, by at least a score of her young friends, that Fred Valtrey was undoubtedly dead in love with her, and she was obliged to believe the story whenever she caught Fred in the act of looking at her. It was not entirely unnatural, therefore, that Fred's appearance at any time should make her look prettier than she ever did to anyone else, and that during pauses in conversation with her admirer her countenance should reflect many thoughts and

wonderings which, though entirely appropriate to the occasion, she would not for the world allow to reach her lips.

She stood one summer evening by Mrs. Malleson's piano, at which sat Fred in a mood so musical and sentimental that he improvised with no little skill. When Ethel asked the name of the music, and learned that it had come into existence while she had listened, she looked in admiring wonder at the improvisor, and said:

"Do you compose such music often, Mr. Valtrey?"

"Not often," said Fred; then looking up with an expression that could not be mistaken, he added, "it isn't often I can play under direct inspiration, as I am this evening."

Ethel colored a little; compliments from Fred had become too abundant for any one of them to cause surprise, yet each took from her for a moment the control of her cheeks. When she rallied she answered:

"If you can compose so charmingly you should publish some music, in pity for girls who can find nothing new that is worth playing."

"I am going to compose a wedding march," said Fred, "and it shall be first played at your wedding, on one condition?"

"What is that?"

"It is," said Fred, rising and taking Ethel's hand, "that you allow me to name the happy man."

Then Ethel's cheek paled for a second, and Fred made haste to recall its bloom again, and as he stood there with Ethel in his arms he thanked Heaven as fervently as if he had a whole heart to exchange for that which he had gained.

His father was overjoyed at the news, and insisted on an early wedding, to which neither of the young people made any objection. Through his old friend, Mrs. Malleson, Fred's father arranged that the bride should have a trousseau in keeping with her coming station as wife of a wealthy young merchant, so Mrs. Malleson took the girl to her summer home, near the city and in spite of the money that Valtrey senior insisted on paying for the work to be done, assisted Ethel and her mother in designing everything and superintending the woman or two employed to do the mere handiwork.

Fred was heartily glad that Ethel was out of town, for he lived in deadly fear that Annie might possibly see him and his fiancée together. Many a time he called on Annie for the express purpose of telling her all and trying to excuse himself by charging the match to his father's commands, but just as many times he came away assuring himself that Annie was the sweetest, most loving woman in the world, and that the truth would kill her. His engagement was noticed by some of the newspapers, so he took more than usual pains to keep Annie ignorant of his real name; she knew him only as

Fred Brown. Before calling on her he always emptied his pockets of letters, cards and everything that could identify him, and was careful not to have in his pocket even a handkerchief bearing his initial.

Fred would have been entirely satisfied to spend the summer in lounging about the village to which Mrs. Malleson had taken Ethel and her mother, but his father, who had come to realize that his son was lacking in all business qualities except quick perception, insisted that he should spend a great deal of time at the office. Still the young man found frequent occasions to run out for an evening to see Ethel, and one September morning was so bright that he determined to steal the entire day from his father, particularly as Ethel had promised the evening before, that if he would call in broad daylight he should see the wedding dress.

When Fred called in the morning, Ethel tripped down toward the gate to meet him. Her face was full of smiles and her hands were full of flowers, and the sun filled her hair with gold, so her lover, as he opened his arms regardless of any eyes that might be within peeping distance, felt as if an angel from heaven had come to him and brought heaven to earth with her. He forgot everything on earth but his bride and his joy; forgot his faults, his duties and responsibilities, until, with a heart that realized only what for the moment was in and around it, he

breathed to heaven an ascription as earnest and eloquent as any devotee could have done.

Ethel led him into a room where her mother and Mrs. Malleson were handling fragments of beautiful fabrics, while an assistant sat sewing at a little window looking out on the garden.

"Prepare to worship?" exclaimed Ethel with mock solemnity, as she opened the door of another room. "Mamma, Mrs. Malleson, won't you come and help me?"

"As if I were not always worshiping her!" exclaimed Fred, as the two older ladies followed Ethel. At the sound of Fred's voice the assistant turned sharply and arose; the motion attracted Fred's attention, and as he turned he found himself face to face with Annie Laythrow.

The girl advanced toward him with a look that he had never seen before. Fred quickly placed his fingers to his lips, but the girl said, in a low tone that made the young man a coward in an instant:

"Are *you* her Fred?"

"No—yes,—that is, I am her Fred, but yours, too," stammered Fred, scarcely above a whisper. "My father compelled me; she is a sweet little thing, but you well know how I love you," he continued.

"And it is you of whom she has talked to me, because she could not keep her joy to herself. And

I have listened in rapture because I too loved dearly. She has talked of your goodness, and I have answered by talk about the good man who saved me from starvation. Oh, God, can all this awful thing be true?"

"Don't lose your senses, Annie, for heaven's sake!" whispered Fred.

"For your sake, you mean," replied the girl.

"Listen," whispered Fred, quickly. "Circumstances over which I have no control compel this marriage, but as there is a God in heaven I will always be tender and loving to you. Don't sneer—many a man has loved more than one woman; what man has done man can do. Ethel is unsuspicious. I will see you often—"

"Never!" exclaimed Annie, "unless you choose between us and cling to me. And yet, she loves you with her whole heart, and she has been so good to me. Oh, what shall I do? what can I do? My child can never know its father—"

"It shall, it shall!" whispered Fred.

"To be ashamed of him?—never!" muttered the girl between closed teeth, as she turned her face toward the window. Fred stood still and looked toward her in an agony of self-abasement and misery, until he roused himself with a great start, hearing Ethel's voice exclaim:

"Why, you dreadful man! Here I am, right in this room, and you, instead of being ready to re-

ceive me, are staring at my pretty seamstress! Never mind; I'll forgive you this once, for I know you couldn't help it. How do you like the dress?"

"It is very pretty; wonderfully pretty," said Fred, each word seeming to require a superhuman effort of utterance.

"I supposed it might surprise you," said Ethel, "but, really, I didn't imagine it would take your voice away." Then she whispered, "Do act bright and nice; I want every one to admire you, even the modest little woman who fitted the dress." Then she raised her voice and said, "Annie, behold your triumph! Your work has completely overpowered my lover."

Annie turned her head and looked fiercely at Fred; Fred looked appealingly at her, and Mrs. Malleson, looking at them both, guessed enough to resolve that she would learn more. Fred forced a few more words of praise of the dress, but Ethel, convinced that the garment did not please him, disappeared and removed it in haste; when she returned, Fred was in the hall, hat in hand. Ethel joined him, exclaiming,

"What! Are you going away so soon?"

"Excuse me, dear," whispered Fred, hastily, "but I am not myself; I've had a sudden attack of an old trouble and must get right back to the city. Don't be frightened; it isn't anything dangerous, but I will be better off at home." Then he started

hastily away, when Ethel sprang to his side, saying:

"Are you too ill to bid me good-bye?"

Fred threw his arms around her, kissed her repeatedly, and then looked down into her face with an expression that caused her to say, when she rejoined the group in the sewing-room, that Fred's looks frightened her.

Fred hurried back to the city, scarce knowing what to do or what to expect. He was half inclined, in his cowardice, to write confessions to both women and his father and leave the country, but on reaching the office he found that something unexpected would demand his attention at once, for his father, following a reprehensible fashion that had recently come in among rich old men, had suddenly died while sitting at his desk.

CHAPTER V.

COMPOUNDING CRIME.

As Fred sat alone with what remained of Prosper Valtrey he alternately thanked heaven that his father was dead and cursed himself for falling so low as to regard the event with any composure. Had the old man lived, however, thought Fred, and learned all that might now be disclosed, the shock would have killed him; better that he should die

believing in the honor of the son who had been his only love for years.

Fred had dearly loved his father, although he had always stood in awe of the old gentleman's uncompromising hostility to all youthful weaknesses; Fred was also very sentimental, so he tried to give himself up to appropriate thoughts of the dead man, but love and sentiment together could not banish, even for a little while, his abject terror of what might come of the scene at Mrs. Malleson's a few hours before. Would Annie denounce him to Ethel? He had caught Mrs. Malleson's eye for a moment and he believed she suspected, so over the body of his father he cursed his father's most cherished friend. Would she discover all, and persuade Ethel and Ethel's mother to break the match? Might she not—blessed thought!—might she not relent, or at least delay any decided action, if she knew what had just befallen him? He would telegraph her at once; and, as she would naturally tell the sad news, perhaps Annie, too, would pity him and spare his reputation, at least for the present, if she had not already blasted it. If only he could secure a few days' respite he was sure he could prevent an explosion, for had he not become an adept in the art of deceiving Annie? He at once hurried a dispatch off to the telegraph office.

Meanwhile, Annie was playing, and all to herself, she supposed, a very old tragedy part. But

Mrs. Malleson's eyes were fixed upon her all the while, and understood all they saw. Although usually quick in deciding, Mrs. Malleson was now in extreme perplexity. She was a woman, so she was indignant; she was a mother, so she was pitiful. She was friend to Ethel, Fred and the parents of both, so she was miserable; she was a woman of the world, so she wondered more what could be done than what should. She believed Annie could compel Fred to make her his wife; she believed also that such action, and knowledge of its cause, would drive Ethel frantic and hurry her mother and Fred's father to the grave. Should justice be done though three suffer, or should one suffer, instead of three?

And while she wondered Ethel incessantly talked about Fred, and told how sick he had suddenly seemed, and how she hoped it was nothing dangerous, and she thought it was too mean for anything that it should happen the very day and hour—almost the very moment — that Fred first saw her wedding dress. And every one of Ethel's sentences brought a new expression of wretchedness into Annie's face, until Mrs. Malleson, fearing a scene, insisted that the girl had been working too hard and must go into the garden with her for a few moments and take the air. Suiting the action to the word, she gently took the work from Annie's hands, and with a kind "Come, child", led her from the room.

No sooner had some shrubbery concealed the couple from view than Mrs. Malleson put her arms around Annie, and said tenderly:

"My poor girl, has he deceived you?"

Annie burst into tears.

"Have you a mother, child?" continued Mrs. Malleson.

"No," sobbed Annie; "I have nothing, no one; I have not even him any longer."

"Then let me be mother to you."

"What can you want of such a wretch as I?"

"Don't call yourself bad names, dear; I know women well, and I know you have an honest heart; let me help you."

"What can you, or any one, do for me?" cried the girl. "He has abandoned me for her. I would kill any other woman who had taken him away from me, but she has been so sweet to me since she made me confess that I, too, had a lover,—since she found out that my lover's name was Fred. I have learned to love her dearly in the fortnight I have been here, and I must lose her, too. Oh, God, what can I do but die?"

"You can live," said Mrs. Malleson—"live to become as happy as you are good. Fred is not worthy of you; he is not worthy of Ethel, either."

"But he seemed so tender, so kind, so fond of me."

"Any man can seem, and be, all that to a sweet

woman, and yet not think of marriage. He could be all that even to a dog. You could compel him to marry you, but the position in which it would place him before the world would make a weak nature like his entirely worthless; he would be a drag and a disgrace to you all your days, and the circumstances of the marriage would constantly keep you in unpleasant notoriety. It would stain forever the name of your child, of whom you ought to care more than of yourself."

"Then what can I do?"

"Let me have you properly cared for. With all my heart I promise to be a loving mother to you. I will have you finely educated, so you can teach, or I will establish you in your present business, if you wish, in some town where you will be known only as a widow. You are attractive in looks, and any one can see that you are of true womanly character; sooner or later some good man will want to make you his wife."

"Don't—please don't!" exclaimed the girl. "I never want to be spoken to again by a man."

"Some day you will think differently, my dear child. Women love truer at twenty-five than at twenty, and are happier in loving, for then they know their own hearts and their needs."

"Please don't talk any more about it now. I will try to believe you—to do as you tell me. I must trust you, for I have not another person on

earth to look to for advice or anything. But I must go away from here at once; oh! to think for whose wedding I have been working."

"You shall go, my dear girl; I will take you away this very day, and to my own house, until we can agree what should be done. My husband and one of my daughters are in town, so you will not lack kind protection."

"Are you not afraid for a daughter of yours to meet a girl that—"

"I am not afraid for her to meet an honest woman. I will devise some work for you; you shall help her at her own sewing, of which she has a great deal, being a young mother. I will take you to her as a young widow who has done excellent work for Ethel. And I will at once devise some excuse to take you away from Ethel and her mother; I will insist that you are not fit to work and must at once go back to your home for a few days, and that I must run into town at once to make a few purchases."

"You are very good to me," said Annie, seizing Mrs. Malleson's hand and kissing it while she was being led toward the house. The kiss was a great relief to the older lady, for her conscience was by no means at ease; she had been assuring herself that she had done a good deed, and at the same time she felt that she was compounding a great crime.

After sending the dispatch announcing his father's

death to Mrs. Malleson, Fred sat like a criminal awaiting the executioner. His two companions, conscience and death, did nothing toward cheering him; on the contrary, they increased his terror, moment by moment, until it seemed to him that life must soon forsake him. He swallowed glass after glass of brandy, but it intensified his wretched excitement without strengthening or stupefying his heart. He finally fell upon his knees beside the bed where his dead father lay, and confessed to Heaven; he prayed wildly for forgiveness; he promised reformation, a correct life—everything good in general, but not the undoing of one single misdeed. A rap at the door brought him to his feet; it was a servant with two dispatches, one of which was quite bulky. For several moments he dared not open them, but finally, after another appeal to the brandy bottle, he desperately tore the envelope from the smaller one and read:

"Profound sympathy. Will see you this evening. M. Malleson."

Fred's heart gave a glad bound. "Profound sympathy." Either his guilty conscience had mistaken the meaning of her look of reproach, or his trouble had caused her to forgive him. He hastily opened the other dispatch, yet hesitated a moment before reading, for might it not be a terrible missive from Annie? At last, with a desperate rally, he dashed into it and found it a long note from Ethel, written

with almost as little reserve and as much affection as if no eyes but his were to see it.

Fred waved the dispatch in air; his conscience vanished like the dream of a second, all his vows and promises went with it, and in the presence of his dead sire he danced gaily about the room, exclaiming:

"Safe! Hurrah! What an infernal coward I've been! It's plain enough that nobody knows anything; Annie hasn't made a fool of herself, as I was afraid she would, and Ethel is still mine. Annie can't tell now—not if she has heard the news, as of course she has; she's too much of a woman. God bless her, what good care I will take of her, and dear Ethel shall not suffer by it either. Saved! Saved! Heaven be praised."

Fred was so grateful that he was about to fall upon his knees once more, not doubtful for an instant that heaven would be grateful to listen to anything he might say, no matter what might be the character of the feeling that prompted his tongue, when Mrs. Malleson, who had performed the not unusual feat of distancing the telegraph by rail, stood before him, exclaiming:

"Saved from what?"

Fred became a pale coward again in an instant.

"Saved from nothing but publicity," continued Mrs. Malleson. "Frederic Valtrey, my dead friend's only son, is a despicable villain."

"What could I do?" whispered Fred, closing the door quickly.

"You could have refrained from proposing to Ethel."

"She was so sweet," said Fred, "so good, so charming, so pure; I loved her so much—"

"You loved yourself so much that to secure her you were willing to deceive her and blast the life of another woman equally good and sweet, whose only fault was that in ignorance and love she had trusted you implicitly. Poor Ethel!"

"You dare not tell her?" said Fred.

"Unfortunately, no, though if I had known that there was one life less to be afflicted by the truth, I believe I should have told her."

Fred hastily thanked heaven that the "one life" had been taken from earth; he was in a mood to be thankful for any misfortune that might befall anyone if only he might be saved from his fears. Yet there was Annie; might not she yet disclose the awful secret? Mrs. Malleson must know something of her looks, her manner, but how could he ask? He thought rapidly for an instant and then asked, with an affectation of penitence and humility:

"Is not Annie a little sorry for me in my great loss?"

"She has something else to be sorry for!" exclaimed Mrs. Malleson angrily. "Listen to me, Frederic Valtrey; against my sense of right, and

only in the hope of saving others from life long wretchedness, I have persuaded the woman who should have been your wife before now to keep silence."

Fred seized Mrs. Malleson's hand; the lady indignantly withdrew it and fell back a step or two.

"To prevent her breaking her word to me, I have persuaded her to come away."

"Bless you—bless you!" exclaimed Fred. "I will see that she never wants for anything."

"I will see to that," said Mrs. Malleson, "but you shall give me the necessary money."

"As much as you want and whenever you want it," said Fred.

"But," continued Mrs. Malleson, "if ever you prove untrue to Ethel Wynne, beware of Annie Laythrow."

"Annie loves me too much to harm me," said Fred, "and I love her with—"

Mrs. Malleson stopped him with an indignant look; then she turned toward the bed on which lay the dead man and said:

"Dear old friend, heaven be praised that your ears can no longer hear."

"Amen!" muttered Fred.

CHAPTER VI.

BLISS AND BOTHER.

ALTHOUGH Fred, whose nature was truly affectionate, regretted the loss of his father and shed many tears of honest grief, he found great comfort in the fact that he was now absolutely his own master and a rich man beside. His father's wealth, like that of most other well-to-do men, had been overestimated by the general public, but Fred's inheritance in real estate, stock in trade and surplus of bills receivable or bills payable amounted to about half a million dollars, and the net profits of the business had for several years averaged nearly forty thousand dollars.

What most pleased Fred, however, was that there was a handsome balance in bank and some government bonds in the safe, for in the debit and credit account he was trying to keep with heaven his good deeds were accomplished principally by the use of ready cash. Freed from his father's restraining influence, he helped everybody, lending money, putting his name to subscription papers and on notes drawn by men who could find no other endorser, nor money to meet their paper at maturity. He gave credit to doubtful customers in spite of Phil Royal's endeavors to make him understand that payment in full could not be expected. In short, in his endeavor to atone for his sins he

cheerfully gave away anything and everything but the sins themselves.

His father's death compelled a quiet marriage, which was greatly against his inclination, but he found some compensation in composing the wedding march he had promised Ethel on the night of his proposal. "The Ethel Wedding March" he called it, and Ethel herself played it again and again until she knew every note of it before she heard it in church.

On the morning of the happy day Fred's heart was as merry as if no other woman but Ethel had ever found a place in it; his several attempts, made soon after his father's death, to find Annie and assure her that he was not so bad a fellow after all and that he still loved her dearly, had been unsuccessful, so between disappointment and wounded pride he succeeded in persuading himself that the girl had forgotten him in spite of all his kindnesses to her, and that it was his duty to forgive and forget her. But on his wedding morning, just as he was putting around his neck a scarf made by Ethel from a fragment of the travelling dress that was to take the place of the costly robe made for a more pretentious wedding, Phil Royal brought him a note that had come to the office marked "Personal and in haste". It read as follows:

"My child and I leave New York to-day, never

to return. I should die if I remained in the city while you were being married to another woman. Be more honest to her than you have to me, for I, too, love her. Goodbye, forever. ANNIE."

This note would have greatly pleased Fred, had the two first words been any but what they were. But—no credit to himself, for he came to it by inheritance—the paternal instinct was strong in Fred, and as he re-read the note he turned so white that Phil Royal exclaimed:

"What is the matter, Fred? Some friend dead?"

"Dead to me," muttered Fred to himself, as he threw Annie's note into the grate.

"I wish I hadn't brought it," said Phil, "but your father always ordered that anything personal should be sent to him at once, so I hurried here with it, as a matter of habit. As I've been the bearer of bad news, I think I'd better hurry away at once."

"Don't go, Phil, dear old boy," exclaimed Fred; "I wouldn't be alone for the next half hour for all the money in New York."

Phil stared blankly at the young man who had been so easy and merry not two minutes before.

"Don't look at me that way, Phil," begged Fred. "I'm not a monster, even if I'm not a saint. And say you won't go, please?"

"I wouldn't go for anything," Phil answered,

"I'll consider it an honor to be near a man who's to be Ethel Wynne's husband within an hour or two. But say, Fred—I haven't had any experience in this sort of thing, so you'll pardon my curiosity, I hope —are all men so frightened when they're about to be married?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Fred so savagely that Phil sprang aside in involuntary terror, "they are if—"

"Never mind the reasons," said Phil; "I'll take your word for it, if you put it so strongly. But it settles my case; I never will have courage enough to marry."

"You don't know what I mean," said Fred, dropping the scarf he had again begun to adjust; "I wan't to make a confession, Phil."

"Don't do it, Fred," pleaded Phil, "you're my employer and master now, and I ought to obey orders, but if you don't want me to be a lone bachelor all my days, don't frighten me more than you've already done."

"But I want to warn you that—"

"Don't do it," said Phil, "I'm loaded now with all sorts of warnings that I've been giving myself for years."

"You don't understand me," said Fred in utter desperation. "I'm not worthy to marry Ethel Wynne."

"That's the right way to feel," said Phil. "If you've nothing more than that to say, go right on."

"She is a pure, sweet, noble, little woman; you can't imagine how perfectly good and lovely she is, Phil," said Fred.

"I believe you," Phil replied.

"While I," said Fred—

"While you," interrupted Phil, "being the son of your father, are as good a man as she or any other woman will ever find. When I think of the kind of husbands some women get—fellows who have been 'sowing wild oats,' as they call it; who suck life dry of its vices before they make any attempt to practise its virtues; who profess to give their heart in marriage to a woman while it belongs in honor to some other woman—when such men—"

"Stop, Phil, stop!" exclaimed Fred.

"You are right, I will," said Phil, "and I ought to apologize for mentioning such fellows on the day that Ethel Wynne is getting a good man for a husband."

Fred dropped into a chair and hid his face in his hands. Phil hurriedly leaned over him and said:

"Forgive me, Fred, I seem to have done and said the wrong thing ever since I started to bring you that note. I'm going to leave before I do any more mischief. But first," and as he spoke Phil poured two glasses of sherry from a decanter that stood on a table and handed one to Fred, "first, I want the honor of drinking with you to Ethel Wynne, the only love of her husband."

Fred raised the glass to his lips, but his hand shook so that most of the wine found its way to the floor.

"Pouring a libation," queried Phil, after draining his own glass. "To what god—or goddess?"

Fred frowned and Phil disappeared in haste and almost determined that he would not attend the wedding, although he had always believed himself Fred's best friend, since the couple were pupils in the same school.

But half an hour later, when Fred stepped into the carriage which was to take him to the church, he was as happy-faced as any young man who ever started on a similar errand, and he met Ethel at the chancel rail and realized anew how much of beauty and goodness was falling to his lot. Annie was as far from his mind as if she was a denizen of a different planet. He uttered all the responses and vows in manly fashion and meant all he said, and as, when he and his wife turned to leave the church, the exulting strains of his own "Ethel Wedding March" fell upon his ear and Ethel herself looked up into his face more sweetly than she had ever done before, Fred enthusiastically resolved to be the truest, tenderest, most devoted husband that ever lived. He would give up all careless habits, all forms of even mild dissipation with his club associates; he would live at home, giving his wife all the time and thought that was not absolutely

demanded by his business, and if heaven gave him children he would be to them such a model as his father had been to him, and in every way prove himself worthy of the love of a true woman and the responsibilities that—

The train of his resolutions was broken, as he escorted his bride from the church door to the carriage, by the cry of an infant that seemed almost at his ear. He stopped abruptly and looked around; he saw only a beggar woman with a baby on her shoulder, but the remaining two or three steps seemed harder than any he had ever taken.

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW RESPONSIBILITY.

FRED's wedding tour lasted three months, to the great benefit of his business, for under Phil Royal's management no new customers were added to the list of undesirables, and those who were of doubtful standing were discouraged by the high prices which Phil placed upon everything they wanted. Nor was the income of the business reduced by Fred's impecunious friends, for as Fred had given orders that no letters of any kind were to be forwarded to him, and had made sure of absolute peace of mind by refusing to leave any addresses and dates that would enable any one to reach him by telegraph or mail, Phil had an unfailing defense against all applicants.

And in almost every day of their long trip Ethel learned to love her husband more dearly. Like most honest wives, she wanted to give herself entirely to her husband, and Fred did nothing to prevent her; she wanted all of her husband in return, and she believed she was succeeding, but wondered whether the delightful experience could ever cease, for Fred's nature was so many-sided that almost every day brought her a new joy. Her husband placed himself in full sympathy with her every taste, longing, hope and aspiration; when she was merry, he was all smiles and humor; when she lapsed into sentiment and reverie her husband read her feelings in her face and gave them back to her in tender words; if her religious feeling was aroused, Fred intensified it by a flood of eloquence that made her believe him a saint. She enjoyed, for the first time in her life, the pleasure of relieving any distressed persons whom she chanced to meet, and she was delighted beyond expression that her handsome, young, rich, stylish husband never failed to give money freely to poor women who carried babies.

At a small Western city that the couple chanced to stop at for a day of rest they attended a concert, of which the principal advertised attraction was "Mlle. Marie Carisol, queen of the metropolitan lyric stage." Fred could not recall her name as one that was famous in musical circles in the metropolis, but

she had not been on the stage more than a moment when he declared that if she were not a lyric queen she deserved to be, and Ethel agreed with him, for Carisol, although her powerful voice showed lack of training, had a superb figure, a handsome face and a wealth of lustrous black hair that Ethel declared was genuine. As Fred strolled to the door during the intermission, he found Carisol's business agent to be a bustling fellow whom he had frequently met at one of the clubs to which Fred belonged. The agent knew Fred to be a rich young man, and he rightfully believed him to be one of the impressionable kind from whom the money wasted on dramatic and musical experiments with attractive women is frequently obtained; the agent also wanted more money than his concert company was earning, so he responded with alacrity to Fred's request for an introduction.

And probably he informed his leading lady in advance of the quality of her new admirer, for when Fred was presented Carisol received him most graciously, even effusively; she overwhelmed him with smiles, and taking his arm, she led him apart from the rest of the company and to the dingy little den known as "the star's room."

"Why are you not on the operatic stage, Mademoiselle?" asked Fred, after bestowing a few conventional compliments.

Carisol shrugged her bare shoulders—Fred could

scarcely keep his eyes from them, they were so shapely,—she opened her magnificent eyes a little wider and showed a new grace or two of her red lips as she answered:

"Because I have not been trained for it. It costs a small fortune to become a dramatic soprano, and I haven't the fortune."

"You may begin at once as costly a musical education as you like," said Fred, "if you will allow me to pay for it."

Carisol did not manifest any surprise, but she began at once to study Fred's face and general appearance, and the young man fully understood that he was undergoing a critical inspection. Finally, Carisol asked, with the most bewildering smile she could command:

"Do you know what it would cost?"

"I do not care," said Fred, with quickening pulse.

Carisol assumed her business face again for a moment, and said:

"I would not dare to give up my present prospects unless I could spend ten thousand dollars a year."

"Then you shall have ten thousand a year," said Fred.

"And how long would you endure such a burden?" asked Carisol.

"Forever, if you like," said Fred, earnestly.

"Oh, that would be too long," said Carisol, with a low, musical laugh.

"As long as you like, then," said Fred.

"You may change your mind before you reach New York," suggested the lady.

"Not before I reach my coffin," replied her new admirer.

"When would you like me to begin," asked Carisol.

"At once, by all means," said Fred.

"My agent would object to ending the season suddenly."

"I can overcome his objections. Come; let us bind this bargain at once. I will give you my check for $5000 in proof of good faith." And Fred took a blank check from his pocket, seized a wretched pen that lay on the rough board table, and hastily signed his name for the amount. Carisol took the check, looked at it, looked at Fred, took the pen and said:

"What sort of an acknowledgment do you want from me?"

"Do lay down that dreadful pen!" exclaimed Fred. Carisol slowly did as she was bid and then turned her beautiful face full upon her admirer. Although she did not speak a word her great eyes softened as they looked inquiringly at Fred. The young man returned her gaze, his eyes growing bolder and hers became softer, until she slowly

dropped her long lashes low and looked up witchingly from under them. In an instant Fred's lips met hers and then strayed over her beautiful shoulders until she whispered:

"Don't, don't, or I shall look like a fright when I go on for my aria."

Fred reluctantly released the glorious creature, who quickly seized a powdered puff, stood before the mirror, and dusted the rosy spots that Fred's lips had made.

"Mlle. Carisol's aria!" shouted the musical director, at the door.

"Is the bargain sealed?" whispered Fred.

"Is it not?" whispered Carisol, simply radiant with excitement over her unexpected fortune. "Then—" and slightly pinching each of Fred's cheeks with her pretty fingers, she kissed him once and hurried from the room to the stage.

From the stage door to his seat in the little theater was not a hundred steps, yet Fred consumed ten minutes in covering the distance, and they were not particularly comfortable moments, either. He was by turns excited, confused, conscience-stricken, pleased and disgusted. Several times he reached the main entrance of the theater, determined to at once take Ethel away and to leave the town by the first train; just as many times he made his way back to the stage door, resolved to see Carisol once more alone. Finally his better nature was victorious

long enough to enable him to enter the house just as Carisol was going off the stage amid thunderous applause. Mechanically he made his way to his seat, and as he sank into it Ethel exclaimed:

"Fred, darling, you don't know what you've missed. Mlle. Carisol sang 'Whistle and I'll Come to Thee, My Lad,' when she was encored after 'Ah! fors' è lui,' and I never before saw such magnificent acting in a song. She is just splendid."

"She's a heavy animal!" growled Fred, and while Ethel stared at him in amazement he vowed to heaven, he called upon the souls of his dead father and mother to witness his declaration, that, although he would be obliged in honor to fulfill his promise to Carisol, his transactions with her should all be in writing and his wife should be his secretary; the heavy beauty would understand him then, he thought, and would be compelled to respect him.

And yet Carisol had sung "Whistle and I'll Come to Thee, My Lad," evidently in unusual style. Perhaps she had been as seriously smitten as he; would it be gentlemanly of him to repel her, after he had made all the advances? The life of a woman in her profession must be very dreary, thought Fred, she needs some one to cling to in a friendly way; perhaps it was only the ordinary freedom of stage manners that had caused her to accept his endearments and return them, just to the extent of one kiss. Probably he had been mistaking her entirely;

what a contemptible villain he had been to misunderstand her! And yet, that one kiss—

All this had been running through his mind while the pianist of the company was pounding the keyboard so earnestly as to be encored. Fred had been utterly oblivious to the music, but suddenly his wife caught his arm and leaned against him. Fred started, looked down, saw a happy face, listened for an instant and learned that the pianist was responding to his encore with Fred's own composition, the "Ethel Wedding March." For an instant Fred's face was marble, but Ethel's hand was tightening on his arm, Ethel's head was pressing closer and closer to his shoulder, so he looked down again, with the face of a good husband, and gently disengaged his arm only to put it tightly around his wife. The "Ethel Wedding March" brought down the house, but Fred did not allow his wife to hear more than the beginning of the applause, for he hurried her out of the house and into a carriage, and as they drove off to their hotel Fred held Ethel in his arms so closely and caressed her so fondly and unceasingly that the happy wife did not think to ask why they had quitted the concert so suddenly.

Arrived at the hotel, Fred begged Ethel to excuse him just a few moments. He hurried back to the theater to buy off Carisol's agent, before there could be any chance for a quarrel and publicity. Then he called on Carisol, at her hotel, merely to

say—principally for the sake of his own reputation at his bank—that if she would rather have cash than a check he would give it to her in the morning by arranging with some local bank for a telegraphic transfer. It was little to say, yet he was so long in saying it that he found Ethel half crazy with fright when he returned.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW BOND.

THE wedding journey ended somewhat abruptly, for the couple had not visited a quarter of the places laid down on their route when Fred announced to his wife that business called him back to New York. Although the statement was literally true, Fred felt like a liar as he uttered it, for the business of which he spoke was entirely on account of Carisol and her agent. He feared they might in some way give publicity to the new arrangement, and Fred doubted whether his reputation among his boon companions was strong enough to avert suspicion.

He blamed himself unceasingly for having in his remorse left the couple as abruptly as he had done on the morning after the concert, for then was his proper time, before they had yet been able to cash his checks, to stipulate that absolute secrecy should be maintained. He had telegraphed freely to both,

but he felt so obliged to be guarded on paper that nothing he had sent satisfied him. The words "absolute secrecy" that he telegraphed Carisol's agent he would have given half his fortune to recall, for now he feared he would be forever in the fellow's power, unless he kept entirely aloof from Carisol, which he was beginning to believe would be utterly impossible.

His moods, resulting from his perplexities and changes of feeling, did not escape the attention of his wife. Ethel was one of those wives whom men call "nice little things," because they always are amiable, affectionate and uncomplaining. Like many another wife of the same class, however, she possessed mind and character to a degree that her husband never suspected and of which she herself was ignorant. She asked no questions, but studied her husband's face carefully and convinced herself that his alleged business troubles were not entirely honorable, and that they were affecting his feelings toward her. During many an hour in which Fred imagined her asleep or idly musing, she was thinking earnestly about the future. What could she do? Nothing, was the only answer she could make to herself, but increase her devotion to Fred, if that were possible, and so try to banish whatever was affecting him so strangely, and if this plan would succeed only for a little while there would be a new natural claim upon his love that she knew

he could not resist, and of which she would not be jealous.

The only error in this train of reasoning came from a good woman's ignorance of the depths to which a man who cannot say "no" can descend. All sorts of good influences have been exerted upon such men by wives, children, parents, brothers, sisters, friends, churches, societies, and public opinion, but stability is never secured until the individual upon whom all effort has been wasted is ready for his coffin. Fred accepted all his wife's endearments and fully returned them in kind, if not in spirit. He lavished upon her every attention that money would assist him to bestow; he caressed her as fondly as if she had been a pretty colt or kitten; he chatted cheerily and sometimes nobly, for Ethel's nature appealed to all in him that was good; but in his moments of silence and abstraction Ethel saw by his face that he was living two lives, one of which was unknown to her.

When they reached New York, however, and Fred spent his days at his office, giving his wife only two or three of his waking hours, Ethel imagined her cause for trouble was disappearing, for her husband, through seeing her so little, was devotion itself while he was with her. The little woman began to accuse herself of unjust suspicions; probably all that her husband had needed to make him what he should be was work. He went into society with her

as much as she desired, entertained handsomely, and seemed very, very proud of the pretty little wife whom everybody admired and who made herself respected by the clearest-headed of her husband's acquaintances.

At his office the old trouble began almost as soon as Fred returned. The balance in bank was quickly reduced almost to nothing, and the bonds were withdrawn and sold, for Fred refurnished his old home at great expense, he lent money freely to irresponsible borrowers, and found numerous excuses for making costly presents to Carisol. Phil Royal remonstrated, after finding hints were of no avail, but Fred said:

"You blessed old-fashioned plodder, what is the matter? Haven't we a quarter of a million dollars' worth of stock, all paid for, and a glorious lot of bills receivable."

"Yes," said Phil, "but there are the bills payable. We must order a lot of English iron at once, to take advantage of low prices and freights. Your father has always paid cash on receipt of invoices; you cannot do it; there is not money enough."

"Collect some bills, then," said Fred.

"They do not amount to enough to pay for all we need."

"Then I will give my note."

"Your father never gave his note except for the

sake of buying it back at a discount. If your paper gets into the market your standing will be affected."

Fred was frightened. He resolved to practice rigid economy at once, and began by walking home that afternoon to save a car fare. He stopped at the club by the way, and opened a bottle of champagne, but that did not seem extravagance, for he had it charged to him, and he further cut down expenses by giving Carisol pearl earrings instead of the new diamonds he had intended to buy for her.

And all the time he imagined that his wife knew nothing, feared nothing. He half wished this were not so, for Carisol had so impressed Ethel on the night in which the happy couple had gone to the concert together in the Western city that she had purchased a photograph of the proud beauty and kept it on the mantel in her bedchamber, and many a time while Fred sat in an easy chair with his little wife in his arms, his happiness would suddenly be marred by Ethel recalling that notable night when "Whistle, and I'll Come to Thee, My Lad," was sung so wonderfully, and when the "Ethel Wedding March," which had been published only two months before, had given her one of the most delightful surprises she had ever known. Fred hated the picture, he felt that his wife was being insulted by the eyes that followed her about the room, and yet, when he happened to be alone in that same

room, he would stare at the picture until he forgot where he was.

Among Ethel's most hearty admirers was Phil Royal. Fred claimed him as his dearest friend and Phil endeavored to return the compliment, but he could not help learning his employer's real character from his business habits, his casual associates and the ultimate destination of some of the money he drew. Phil began to suffer nearly as badly as Ethel had done, but he worked bravely and discreetly to save both husband and wife. He lost no opportunity to talk with Fred about Ethel, continually finding new qualities in her to praise, and all his talk had its effect, for it strengthened for the time whatever good resolutions were newest in Fred's mind, and it occasionally sent the young husband home early to his wife instead of to the quiet hotel in which Carisol occupied elegantly furnished apartments, although Fred's nominal attraction was the billiard-room.

Carisol's musical education was not neglected. It did not progress as rapidly and thoroughly as might have been expected, considering the sum of money she had required for it, but the lady had known other handsome members of her profession suddenly to lose the assistance upon which they were depending and she had no intention of losing a career for the sake of a rich young man's fancy. She occasionally appeared at a concert, to keep her

name before the public, and critics gradually came to speak better of her voice. She was greatly in demand among society people who gave musicales, and more than once Fred, sitting in the drawing-room of a fashionable acquaintance, was obliged to listen to his wife's enthusiastic praises of the woman who was daily becoming more dangerous as her rival.

Finally, one evening Ethel, who had been receiving some intimate friends who told her all about a party which she had not felt well enough to attend, exclaimed:

"Fred, dear, why haven't you ever arranged to have Mlle. Carisol sing at any of our little evening affairs? She is far superior to some of the people you have selected."

Fred was startled, and looked so, but he quickly recovered himself, and, turning his face aside, he muttered:

"She is too expensive."

"Why, she charged Mrs. Brown only twenty-five dollars, and said she would cheerfully sing without charge were it not that people would think her too anxious to be seen and heard. I don't think twenty-five dollars is high for such singing."

Fred did not answer, but he frowned, closed his lips tightly, and began to pace the room. Ethel looked at him in utter amazement; could it be—oh! could it be that her husband, whom she had always

supposed to be wealthy, was in financial trouble, like many other alleged rich people of her acquaintance had from time to time proved to be? Was she one of the silly women whose extravagances had ruined their husbands?

She crossed the room rapidly, stepped in front of her husband, threw her arms around his neck, looked up into his face in a way that was new to her, and said:

"My darling husband, answer me just one question. What is the real reason that you think Mlle. Carisol too expensive?"

Fred's face became blank, and he averted his eyes. He half determined to tell his wife the truth, crave mercy, and become a better man, but as his eyes met Ethel's again his wife said:

"Is it because you are in trouble about money? —because your silly little wife is letting you spend more every month than she has spent in her lifetime, and you are too indulgent to try to curtail expenses? If it is, we will live upon almost nothing, and begin at once; I know how to do it, dear, and I would be just as happy if we were poor. Tell me truly; is it my extravagance that is troubling you?"

"No—no!" exclaimed Fred, wrenching away from his wife. "My God, no!"

"You seem to have plenty of money for everything else," continued Ethel, "or I would not have suggested Mlle. Carisol's name. I merely thought

she was a more pleasing singer than some of the people we get, and she is not out of place in a parlor, for she dresses in taste and has good manners and is so handsome. The night she sang at Mrs. Smith's I met her in the ladies' dressing-room for a moment or two, and I had to tell her how I had once enjoyed hearing her in the West, and she was real affectionate and sweet to me."

"What?" exclaimed Fred, fiercely.

"Why, there was no harm in it, dear," said Ethel, "she was not at all presuming; some one introduced us a moment afterward, but she has never thrown herself in my way since. I am sure——"

Ethel's sentence was ended by an interruption from Fred; it was only a single word, but not one that Ethel was accustomed to hear. What could it all mean? While she wondered, Fred turned suddenly to the mantel and taking from it the photograph of Carisol he tore it in two and threw the fragments into the fire. Ethel turned pale and then red, and when Fred said he was obliged to go at once to a dinner that was to be given at the club to a dear old friend of his, she did not attempt to prevent him.

Fred dashed along the street, eager to go to Carisol's hotel and take leave forever of his wife's rival. He stopped at his club for a glass of brandy to nerve him for whatever difficulty there might be in his task, and he was implored to be one of a

dinner party in honor of a good fellow, not unknown to him, who had just come over from England. He declined, but joined the party merely for the purpose of taking a glass of wine with his casual foreign acquaintance. Some one was telling a good story, so Fred listened; then he heard another, and told one himself, and assured himself that he would be better fitted for a scene if he were fortified with a good dinner, so he sat at table for four hours. Suddenly he realized that it was 10 o'clock; he rose hastily and said, "Excuse me, boys; I must go home."

"Go home?—which home?" asked one guest who had taken more wine than was necessary for his stomach's sake. A great roar of laughter arose from the party, half a dozen pointed speeches followed it, and Fred, after trying for a moment to be indignant, joined in the laugh against himself. Nevertheless, he postponed his visit to Carisol, and in his shame at the publicity of an affair that he had fondly supposed was unknown he hurried home to his wife. He found her awake, and beside her was a little stranger whom no one in the world had seen until an hour before.

CHAPTER IX.

HELP—GOOD AND BAD.

FRED at once installed himself as his wife's chief nurse, sitting by her bedside almost unceasingly, talking to her fully as much as the doctor would allow, singing softly when she was nervous, and holding her hand by the hour, as this operation seemed to give her great comfort. And often, while Ethel slept, Fred would take his son in his arms, hold him close, study his little face, and promise to be the best father alive. Occasionally he would abruptly lay the child down, for unbidden thoughts of another little child would come to him, and wonder as to where his unseen firstborn was—whether it was son or daughter; whether it was dead or alive; in comfort or in want; whether Annie, like many another woman in her condition, might not have become the slave of another man, to whom Fred's child might be a hated nuisance. At such times his thoughts almost drove him mad and his only relief came from earnest vows of reformation, promises to find his lost child and care for it, to be absolutely faithful to Ethel, to atone for his misdeeds by doing better ones.

The effect of all his joy, sorrow and good resolutions was that he kept himself away from Carisol for a full fortnight, and when he called himself to account for having broken his resolution to see her

at all he promptly blamed his business troubles instead of himself. He had to pay several large notes, to which he had placed his name as endorser, and to do so he was obliged to sell some notes given by customers who had always been assured that their paper should not be placed in the market; consequently he lost some old friends of the house. To avoid further trouble, and have once more a respectable bank balance he, against Royal's earnest advice, undersold the market to the extent of several large bills, one result being that he depleted stock that would have to be replaced at once, while another was that the trade felt certain that he either was in trouble or was adopting hazardous means to secure new business. His bankers soon learned what he was doing, and as they were in a position to correctly imagine the reason, they insisted upon his listening to some advice that he received so ungraciously that he seriously injured his standing with those whose assistance he greatly needed.

Trouble about money was so new and strange to Fred that when by himself he raged and chafed as if he were a caged animal. Royal advised him to make his peace with the bank, which would not be hard to do, as the bank's officers knew the business was still worth a very large amount of money, but this Fred flatly refused to do. His self-respect, he said, was more to him than his money. Phil doubted the truth of this; he began even to doubt

whether Fred had any genuine self-respect, but Fred was master, and Phil had no means of compelling him. The autocrat of the business determined to transfer his account to some other bank, but on Royal's earnest advice he inquired first as to what assistance he could hope to obtain. The conditions imposed offended him so greatly that he resolved that his father's old bankers were not such bad fellows after all, so he went back to them, asked their advice, accepted the plan they proposed for making his financial affairs easier until economy and the profit that would naturally accrue in the course of business would enable him to resume his father's custom of taking advantage of the market by purchasing always for cash.

But before this desirable change could occur Mrs. Malleson's husband, who was a successful speculator, had proposed a little venture in the stock market, and, as Fred did not have the necessary cash, Malleson took his note, indorsed it and arranged for Fred to sell it to a mutual acquaintance. The speculation proved slightly remunerative, so it was repeated. Then, as Fred had to meet some large demands upon his purse, it occurred to him that, although somewhat irregular, it would not harm anyone if he were himself to put Malleson's name on a note and sell it. His notes were all made payable at his own office, for it would not have been judicious to let his bank know that he had any busi-

ness dealings with a well-known stock operator like Malleson. Who, then, would know anything about the irregular endorsement but Fred himself? The profits of the business would enable him to take care of his paper—there could be no doubt of that. Of course, he would not allow himself to run any risk in the matter, for did not his reputation depend upon it?

He realized on a large note bearing Malleson's name on the back, and Ethel and Carisol were inundated with costly presents during the week that followed. He met the note at maturity, but not without so much effort that he was obliged soon to repeat the dangerous experiment. Then he began to apply himself seriously to business, or he thought he did, for he read the daily papers and wrote his private letters at his office instead of the club, and he insisted on expensively entertaining at dinner every customer who happened in at appropriate hours.

But money, whether obtained from customers or by sale of notes with forged endorsements, melted in his hands, and finally he found himself compelled to study a private balance sheet which he himself had prepared. He saw no possible way of escape except by more operation in forged paper, or by taking a partner who would pay cash for an interest in the business. The latter plan was distasteful to him, for to have one critic in his office was bad enough.

To one hope of relief he clung almost with desperation. An uncle of his wife was so pleased at Ethel's marriage to a rich man that he wrote her she would become owner of $50,000 worth of good securities when he died. The old man had been seriously ailing for some time, and Fred began to hope that he would soon die, for the stock and bonds, which of course Ethel would promptly put into her husband's hands, would make all arrears right and leave a handsome surplus. From hoping to longing was but a short distance in Fred's mind, and the longing soon gave place to a semi-insane belief—the child of the wish, that Ethel's uncle would die. He thought of it by day, dreamed of it by night, and came to live in daily expectation of it, so he had no doubt of what had happened when one night, on his arrival at home, Ethel flew to him, threw her arms around his neck, and exclaimed:

"Fred, dear, you can't begin to guess what glorious news I have for you?"

"Bless you," exclaimed Fred, who knew that Ethel was troubled over the few revelations he had made to her about his business embarrassments, "what is it? Don't tell me all at once, it might be too much for me."

"But I must!" exclaimed Ethel. "I can't wait a moment, for it is just the news you need to make you forget all your troubles."

"Thank Heaven!" said Fred, taking both his

wife's hands in his own and looking at her with a happier face than she had seen on him in a long while. "What is it!"

"Baby has cut its first tooth!"

Fred sobered in a second, turned his face away, and muttered,

"Oh, hell!"

Ethel burst into tears and Fred hastened to console her, saying very tenderly and untruthfully,

"Forgive me, dear; just then there happened to come into my mind something very important that I had forgotten."

Ethel was not easily appeased, but Fred's remorse was genuine and his endearments were so persistent that husband and wife finally passed the happiest evening they had known since Ethel had left her sick bed.

But with dawn all of Fred's old troubles returned, and they increased day by day. Unable to retrieve his fortunes by management he began to trust to luck, and ventured money wildly in the stock market, on horse races and at the gambling table, and when he lost, as he usually did, he sought consolation in a jolly dinner at the club or a quiet evening with Carisol.

His wife grieved over his troubles as any good wife would have done, although she knew little of their details. She did not fear poverty, if it had to come, but her husband's desperate manner often

filled her with dread. Like most women, she was religious by instinct, and when in trouble she took refuge in her religious feelings. So one evening, when Fred retired from the dinner-table looking particularly moody, she tried to persuade him to seek comfort where she herself never failed to find it, and finally she prevailed upon him to accompany her to the prayer-meeting of the church which they attended every Sunday.

The experience was new to Fred, but his sympathetic nature enabled him to at once enter into the spirit of the meeting so thoroughly that after he had listened to several hymns and prayers and the leader had invited remarks from those who felt moved to speak, Fred astonished the little audience and delighted his wife by delivering a most eloquent rhapsody on the comforting influence of the Holy Spirit in the souls of persons who were in affliction. The subject had never entered his mind until he came into the meeting an hour before, but how was any one to know this?

As for Fred, he was so impressed by his own effort that he left the room in a high state of spiritual exaltation; as he reached the sidewalk, his wife clinging to his arm, some one touched him on the shoulder, and the man—a stranger to Fred —whispered:

"Is this Mr. Valtrey?"

"Yes," replied Fred.

"Then, sir," whispered the man, "You are my prisoner."

"For what?"

"Forgery."

"It is all a mistake," whispered Fred, without a moment's hesitation. "But I will go with you. Let me see my wife home first: follow me as close as you like; I cannot get away from you."

The three moved toward Fred's house, the prisoner talking as volubly with his wife about the meeting as if nothing had happened. "Come in, sir," he said to the officer, as they reached the door. The officer followed the couple into the parlor.

"I must bid you good-bye for a few moments, dear," said Fred, following his wife into the library behind the parlor, while the officer stood where he could watch the front door.

"Don't be long, dear," said Ethel.

"Only a few moments," Fred answered. Then he stepped on tiptoe out of a side door of the library, down the basement stairs, out through the front door and flew rapidly down the street and toward the river.

CHAPTER X.

FRIENDLESS.

When Fred Valtrey stole on tiptoe from his own home he was conscious of but one desire; he wanted to reach the river and avoid impending humiliation by drowning himself. During a run of half a mile, however, he changed his mind on finding that he was not pursued. Why should he not live, and redeem the past? Ethel would believe anything he might write her in explanation of his disappearance, and he could mail Phil Royal some directions about the business, begging him to settle the charge of forgery by making forced sales to a sufficient extent to meet the forged paper. He could remain away from home until all had blown over or been settled, and then reappear and trust his ready tongue to make plausible explanations.

This plan seemed so feasible that he ceased running, although he turned toward the downtown district and walked rather than risk meeting some acquaintance on a horse-car. It occurred to him that he had but little money in his pocket, that there were a few hundred dollars in currency and gold in the safe at the office, beside two or three thousand dollars in Government bonds belonging to Ethel's mother, and that he had a key to the office and knew the combination of the safe. He therefore tramped down town, and although his heart

beat wildly whenever he passed a policeman or private watchman he reached his office without being accosted by any one. Fortunately for his peace of mind, there were iron shutters at the windows, so having locked himself in and taken from the safe everything he could use, he wrote a long, rambling letter to Royal, claiming that financial annoyances had made him insane and irresponsible at times, and that he must go away for a little rest; he begged Royal to compromise the forgery on any terms that the business would allow. Then he wrote a short letter, full of affection, to Ethel, saying that he would be obliged to leave town for a few days, and that she must trust in him, no matter what she might hear.

As he cautiously emerged from the store and made his way rapidly toward Broadway it occurred to him that with the amount of money he now had in his possession he might go into the new mining regions of the West and speculate. He had known stupid fellows to grow rich out there in a very short time; why should he not do likewise? And why not take pleasant company with him, if he was going into a rough country? A man is never half a man when alone, argued Fred.

First finding a messenger to deliver his letter to Ethel, he got into a hack and was driven near the hotel in which Carisol lived, entering the more private entrance with a key such as all the per-

manent boarders had. Carisol received him effusively; she seemed to him more charming than ever, and the thought that he might for a few weeks or months have her for his sole companion made him feel equal to whatever endeavor might be before him.

But he realized that he had no time to lose; if some of his club acquaintances knew of his relations with the handsome soprano, why might not the officer soon be on his track? So he proceeded abruptly to business by saying:

"Pet, let us have a change from the humdrum of New York."

"Good!" exclaimed Carisol, clapping her hands. "Where shall we go?—to Europe?"

"Europe is too far," replied Fred, with a shiver. "Suppose we go West for a little while?"

Carisol shrugged her shapely shoulders and answered:

"The West is horrid, why do you want to go there?"

"Business—mining business," sighed Fred. "I must go, I can't bear to go alone, and there is but one person with whom I could be happy as a travelling companion. You shall have some glorious horseback exercise, see strange sights, and find new adorers wherever you go."

Carisol grew radiant as she contemplated the prospect, but she could not help asking:

"What will people say?"

"What will people know?" replied Fred. "The people with whom I will do business do not know me by sight, and I do not intend that they shall know my real name. Why should they imagine that you are not my wife?"

"Everything is cold, and rude, and ugly in the mining county, I've been told," said Carisol. "I hate all such things."

"But you love me—just a little, don't you?" asked Fred, so tenderly that Carisol threw herself upon his neck in a manner, that would have seemed a full answer in the affirmative, even had she not looked up sweetly in his face and replied:

"You know I adore you, and would crawl around the world on my knees after you."

"Then listen," said Fred, holding her close with both his arms. "I am a forger, and I must leave New York until my irregularities are made good. There is nowhere I can safely go but to the West, and I will simply die unless someone who loves me goes with me."

Almost from the beginning of this speech Carisol endeavored to break from Fred's embrace; when finally she suceeded she looked neither affectionate nor good-natured as she exclaimed:

"A forger? Oh, do go away; what if the police should come here in search of you?"

"I will go at once," said Fred, "on one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you accompany me."

"I cannot," said Carisol, petulantly, "I haven't a single trunk packed, and I am sure I don't know where any of my travelling things are."

"Never mind them," said Fred, hastily, "we will buy anew whatever you want; you shall go shopping to your heart's content when we reach Chicago."

"That will take a great deal of money," said Carisol, looking very businesslike as she spoke.

"Let it," replied Fred; "I have a great deal with me."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed the beauty, clapping her hands and smiling again as she continued:

"How much?"

"Oh, plenty for a short trip," said Fred; "four or five thousand dollars."

Carisol's smile disappeared. "Four or five thousand dollars! Why, it would not even buy what I would need at once if I went with you. And what would become of me if anything were to happen to you on the road, if you should be arrested, for instance?"

"No fear of that," said Fred, and then he turned quickly toward a mirror, seized a pair of scissors that lay on a dressing-table, and rapidly clipped his moustache away until his upper lip looked as if it had been three days unshaven. His entire expression of countenance was so changed by this opera-

tion that Carisol started as he again turned toward her, and she exclaimed:

"Why, I never imagined you could look so different—and so homely!"

Fred tried to throw some spirit into his face, but under Carisol's expression of surprise and disdain, his attempt was a failure; he could only look dazed and desperate. The couple stood silently contemplating each other for a moment or two, until Fred, unable to any longer endure the look that was rapidly becoming contemptuous, exclaimed:

"My darling, have pity on me; don't keep me here any longer in suspense and danger. I ought to be off, and at once."

"So I think," said Carisol coldly, "and if you care as much for me as you profess to do, you will lose no time in going. I don't want a lot of policemen to come hammering at my door, and I don't want to see my name in the paper in the morning mixed up with the sensational story of an arrest. For a long time I've entrusted my reputation to you, but now I begin to believe that you haven't any regard for it."

"For Heaven's sake don't be cruel," exclaimed Fred.

"It is you who are being cruel," said the lady angrily, and pushing Fred toward the door. "Go—go! I shall hate you forever if you don't go this instant."

"Then come!" said Fred, seizing a cloak and hat that lay on a chair, and attempting to dress Carisol for the street.

"Not for anything!" was the reply, as the woman disengaged herself, leaned against the mantel, folded her arms and looked coldly and defiantly at her lover.

"Carisol," said Fred dropping the wrap and hat and clasping his hands appealingly, "I have heaped money and luxuries upon you."

"Very true," was the reply.

"I have given you more than my liabilities amount to."

A look of mild surprise was the only answer.

"I have shamefully neglected my wife and child for you."

"Blame yourself for that," said Carisol, coldly. "I have never called you away from your family; you always came here on your own invitation."

"That doesn't alter the fact," said Fred. "Financially and morally you have been the one great expense of my life; I never have complained of the cost; I do not complain now, but in this most terrible experience that I have ever had, I think I am not selfish in asking for a partial payment."

"You have been paid in full," said Carisol, calmly.

Fred clutched at the back of a chair and leaned on it as he stared incredulously at the woman who a few moments before had been all affection.

"Don't glare at me in that dreadful way," exclaimed Carisol, "it makes you look like some of the vile tramps that are in the streets at night. What more can you ask of me? Do you imagine that your money bought me, body and soul, reputation, self-respect, and everything else? Do you expect me to give up my profession—"

"Your profession!" interrupted Fred, with a sneer.

"I repeat it, my profession," said Carisol, "to which I am devoted, and in which I should now be more prominent were it not for you. Do you expect me to give it up, and with it all my hopes of life, to be companion to a fugitive from justice? Why, you are worse than Shylock! For Heaven's sake rouse yourself—be a gentleman and hurry away from here."

"I cannot bear to go out into the world alone," moaned Fred from between the hands he had closed over his eyes.

"Then take your wife with you," said Carisol, "who has a better right to cheer you in your trouble?"

Fred rallied himself, intending to rebuke the woman for even mentioning his wife, but Carisol stood so handsome, cold and proud that his courage failed him. He smiled, but felt that he was looking mean; he seized his hat, and said:

"Perhaps you will change your mind when you

hear of me as a silver king. Let us at least part friends: give me just one kiss."

He attempted to embrace her as he spoke, but she sprang to the bell, exclaiming:

"Go, or I myself will summon the police and denounce you, rather than be compromised if officers find you here."

Fred shook his fist madly at the woman, and then dashed out of the room and out of the house.

But where should he go? The officer had had time to report his escape and have all ferries and railroad stations watched. Had the removal of his moustache changed his face so that it would escape detection? He remembered that about midnight there would be a train for the north, and it might be safer for him to go north—to Canada, perhaps —than west, at least until he could make a radical change in his appearance. He hurried to the station, but, not daring to venture in, stood in a shadow at the end from which the cars emerged and boarded a train that was in motion.

CHAPTER XI.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER.

When Fred Valtrey boarded the train he hurried forward, through one car after another, until he reached the smoking-car, where he crouched in a seat, turned up his collar and turned down his hat

brim to hide himself as thoroughly as possible; he did not suppose a detective would search the train for him, but nevertheless he felt that he could not look anyone in the face just then. He was a forger and a runaway; he had stolen bonds from his wife's mother; his wife at that very moment was undoubtedly in great trouble of mind, and he had just been spurned by a woman whom he had frequently told himself was mentally and morally far below him. He had once seen, on the same railroad and in the same car, some convicts on their way to Sing Sing, and he felt that on his own face there must be the same hangdog expression that they had worn.

But as the train dashed along and left the city far behind it Fred's spirits began to improve. All was over between him and Carisol; he had frequently wished this might be, and at last his wish had been gratified, so he fervently thanked Heaven, and he believed he meant just what he said. He told himself it was shameful that a man with such a wife as Ethel should allow himself to care for any other woman. He assured himself that Carisol was the sole cause of his misfortunes; now that he was rid of her he was sure he would become a true man again.

Then he thought of his forgeries and the arrest. Why had he not thought to write Malleson also, while at his office? The business was good for all his debts and Malleson was enough of a business

man to know it; he would telegraph Malleson that he had gone out of town for money and would soon be back; for further particulars see Phil Royal. He would also ask Malleson to avoid publicity; the fellow certainly would understand what he meant and be enough of a gentleman to comply with his request.

And with every mile of distance that the train made Fred's heart grew a little lighter. What could he not do, now that he was entirely without any domestic or social claims upon his time? He had several thousand dollars in money and bonds; he had heard numerous stories of men who had made fortunes in a week, in the mining regions, on a quarter as much capital as he commanded. He did not know how they did it, but he would find out; what man had done man could do. Fortunes in the mining districts went as easy as they came, he had heard, but he was sure it would not be so with him, for was he not under the most imperative moral obligations of every sort to preserve correct habits, save his money and hurry back to his darling wife and child? Not a glass of liquor should pass his lips, not a card should his fingers touch; no smile of woman should affect him in any way until he had re-instated himself in the regard of those who had respected him.

The train hurried on; most of his fellow passengers in the smoking-car fell asleep and Fred

began to wish that he too could sleep, but the motion of the car forbade him to do more than doze fitfully and endure dreams that frightened him so that he preferred to remain awake. He began to feel lonesome; he so longed to talk to some one that he was almost willing to risk detection. He arose, yawned, and looked cautiously around him; everyone seemed to be sleeping except two parties who were playing cards. He lounged near one quartet for a few minutes, but the members seemed friends; they certainly were so absorbed in one another that they paid no attention to him, so he passed toward the other party, which seemed to be composed of farmers. They, too, appeared to be disinclined to divert their attention from the same, so finally Fred, in utter desperation, exclaimed,

"Gentlemen, I'll give any one five dollars for his place at the board."

Four men arose as one, and extended their left hands towards Fred, who took the cards that were nearest him and paid in gold the sum offered. Gold was not as plentiful then as now, so the lucky man stared at the half eagle, bit it, and then held it up for the inspection of his late associates. The game went on, but without much spirit; although there was no betting, Fred's partner did not seem entirely at ease, while his two antagonists eyed him so suspiciously that he felt very uncomfortable. Fred tried to create a pleasanter feeling by dis-

tributing the contents of a cigar-case he happened to have in his pocket, but his effort was not successful; one man made an excuse to retire from the game and no one could be found to take his place; another pretended to feel sleepy and the third finally said there was no fun in playing with only one man.

Fred was desperate; only two hours were gone of the six or seven to be consumed between New York and Albany. Again he looked around: two of the recent players were eyeing him suspiciously, and he heard one member of the other couple say in a loud whisper:

"Nobody but a gambler or a thief would pay for a place at a card-table."

Fred felt alarmed, and tried to allay the suspicions he had aroused. He did not succeed very well, so he felt meaner than ever as he slunk into a seat by the deserted card-table and pretended to sleep. At Poughkeepsie some negroes came into the car, and, finding it crowded, took the seats around the table. They had been to a dance; they had been drinking; their hilarity was spasmodic and rude, but Fred had got beyond being particular; he was only too glad to see or hear anyone who seemed happy. The negroes began to play cards, and Fred took a hand; they passed a bottle of very bad whisky and Fred took a drink, and he was heartily sorry when the party got off the car about an hour later.

Then he fell asleep, but was roused soon afterward, at Albany.

He hurried to a restaurant, and was delighted at his inability to recognize his own face in a mirror. After swallowing a hurried breakfast he was shaved and had his hair, which from boyhood he had worn rather long and curly, cut very short. Then he bought a cap and assumed correctly that his disguise was thorough.

By the time he took the first train for the West Fred felt that he had been away from home for days; he also felt that he was entirely freed from old restraints, and the sensation was greatly to his liking. In spite of all his noble resolutions of the night before he soon found himself endeavoring to attract the attention of a comely lady in the same car with him, and although he did not succeed, he felt very exultant that he was where he could do as he pleased without having to fear what people might say.

Fred bought every variety of newspaper that was sold in the car, and looked eagerly at the telegraphic news from New York. He could find nothing referring to his own case, so he could imagine only that the facts developed too late in the evening to become public in time for the morning papers. If only he could avoid publicity until he could recoup himself! Finally he wrote a dispatch to Malleson and gave it to a brakeman of a train going in the opposite direction, to send from Albany.

He tried to read, but books failed to interest him; he endeavored to study the scenery, but too often he found himself vacantly contemplating the back of the seat in front of him. Finally, in sheer desperation, he sought the smoking-car, where he had in earlier days learned to look for the men to whom one might easiest introduce one's self.

The car did not contain a dozen passengers, but among them were several commercial travellers who seemed in absolute ecstacy over something which one of their number was saying. Fred drew near them and listened to a story that should have driven him to the other end of the train, but it had no such effect; on the contrary, he laughed heartily, upon which the party informally received him, and he told a story, just by way of introduction, that he assured himself he would not have told in any different company; a few minutes later he told another, and listened to several more until he began to feel that his new acquaintances were as jolly as any of the boon companions he had left behind at the club. He experienced a momentary twinge of shame, and withdrawing himself abruptly from the party he took a seat and contemplated pictures, which he always carried in his pocket, of his wife and child. But a story that was received with unusual demonstrations of ecstacy recalled him to the crowd, and he did not thereafter cease to listen while anyone had a tale to tell. The entire party

proposed to leave the train at Rochester, and the prospect of being left alone again seemed so dismal that Fred yielded to their invitation to stop over with them and see the town. He saw a great deal more than he had intended to do, and drank so much that when he awoke in the morning he could not remember much of what had happened. Worse yet, he had been robbed of his bonds which he had carried in a side pocket and could dimly remember having shown to some one during the night. Such of his new friends as he could find could not give him any clue to the robber, and they were so persistent in their advice that he should consult the police that to avoid making himself conspicuous he hurriedly left the city and went farther west with lighter pocket and heavier heart.

CHAPTER XII.

NEW EXPERIENCES.

SEVERAL people were in great trouble of mind before Fred Valtrey had fairly left New York. One of them was his wife, who had been terribly frightened by the strange conduct of her husband's pretended friend, the officer, when he learned that Fred had left the house; her trouble was not lessened by the receipt of her husband's wild note. Another sufferer was Phil Royal; he had long known his em-

ployer and old schoolmate had bad habits and bad friends, but he never imagined that Fred could stoop to crime.

Malleson, whose signature Fred had forged, felt nearly as uncomfortable as Phil, for he had intended only to frighten Fred into a settlement that would make Malleson secure should he be obliged to take up the notes. The officer whom he had sent after Fred was merely a private detective, with no authority whatever, except Malleson's order to bring Fred to a certain hotel where the injured man intended to attempt a compromise before resorting to harsher measures.

Armed with Fred's written instructions and a power of attorney that had been executed many months before, Phil settled with Malleson and prevented any publicity. But to allay Ethel's anxiety was not so easy; several times every day the troubled wife sent to the office for word about her husband, and several times a day her messenger returned with nothing more satisfactory than expressions of Phil's sympathy. Then Phil inserted personal notices, as distinct as he dared make them, in the newspapers, but still no word came from the missing man. As days passed into weeks, and weeks into a month, Ethel's anxiety made her very ill, upon which Phil advertised at greater length and more plainly, but still no reply.

Fred's first recognition of an advertisement ad-

dressed to himself occurred at Leadville. He never failed to search any New York paper that came to his hand, and he had been astonished at finding no report of his crime and disappearance. It seemed impossible that Royal could have suppressed mention of every kind, for court records could hardly escape the notice of news reporters.

But whatever had happened, he himself was safe; this was his only consolation as he lounged through the dismal streets of Leadville, and waited for the fortune which he, like some thousands of other sanguine fools, had imagined would fall into his hands as soon as he reached the mining regions. He had found nothing in which the few hundred dollars remaining in his pockets could be so invested as to yield a quick and large return. Meanwhile he felt unutterably lonesome, for no man could have been worse company for himself. He scrutinized every face he saw, but the men whom he thought he might like to know were generally too busy to be easily approachable; as for women,—well, he did not wonder that Leadville was regarded as a little hell on earth.

But something had to be done, for he felt he would become crazy unless he could escape from his own thoughts. He entirely forgot business demands in his desire to find companionship of some sort, so one night in utter desperation he strolled into a place which, under the comprehensive title

of "saloon", was hotel, rum-shop and gambling-hell. Among other games, faro was attracting some attention and Fred looked on until several successes at guessing impelled him to risk some of his own money. He played carefully at first, and won; then he trusted to luck and lost, and when he arose from the table his capital was reduced to less money than he already owed at his hotel.

But it would never do for him to seem a bankrupt at the place where he had assured himself he would retrieve his lost fortunes, so he turned carelessly from the table merely as if temporarily tired of the game, and lounged about the room. Finally he picked up a New York paper, in which he found the following notice:

FRED: Hurry Home; the business needs you and so does everybody. Don't delay. Nothing to fear. PHIL.

For a moment Fred was in ecstacy. He could not doubt that the notice had been penned by Phil Royal, and he longed to respond to it, but how could he do it? It would cost him more than a hundred and fifty dollars; he had not one tenth that amount in his pocket. He made a hasty estimate of such property in his possession as could be turned into money. His watch had cost nearly three hundred dollars and the chain nearly a hundred dollars more. He wore a diamond worth several hundred dollars, so it seemed that he was not without resources. But to whom should he sell? And how

could he humiliate himself to the extent of offering his personal property to a dealer?

While he wondered he saw a man, ruined like himself, by the game, borrow some money from one of the men behind the bar, giving a watch as security. Fred immediately followed his example by offering his diamond ring for the barkeeper's inspection. The man looked at it in a business-like way, praised the stone, but would not lend more than fifty dollars on it, and Fred offered his watch and chain also, realizing a hundred and twenty-five dollars in all. It would be enough to take him East, he thought. His heart bounded at the prospect and as he placed the money in his pocket he pressed close to his heart that portion of his coat in which were the pictures of his wife and child.

"Goin' to try yer luck agin?" asked an awkward, simple looking fellow who had observed the transaction at the bar.

"I guess not," said Fred.

"I'm durned sorry fur that," replied the stranger, "fur I wuz lookin' for somebody to take a quiet game of twenty-deck poker with me. Faro's too all-fired excitin'."

"I'll play a game or two, just to be obliging," said Fred, "but only for small stakes—say dollar limits."

"That's my style, too," said the stranger. "I always sez to them fellers, sez I, 'Where's the fun

of playing fur so much that yer bound to feel bad if yer lose?' Them's my senterments."

The game began quietly, Fred having first learned from the barkeeper at what hour he could start for the East. The game went on; Fred played with extreme caution, but found his adversary no more skillful than he, for the small amount of money he had devoted to the game was reduced very little if any. The betting continued low; but finally Fred exclaimed:

"This hand is too good to win only a dollar. Let's make it ten."

"I don't mind sayin'," said the stranger, "that I've got a middlin' good hand myself; but what's the good uv raisin'? Whichever on us loses 'll hev to feel bad; them's my senterments."

"Hang the sentiments, for just once," said Fred. "I'll dare you to make it ten."

"Well, I don't take no dares," said the stranger, covering Fred's money with an equal sum, "but I ain' above saying that if I lose I'll feel mighty—what yer got?—two pairs?—then I won't worry no more, I guess, for I hold three queens."

Fred scowled and swore, and the stranger said:

"There now; didn't I tell yer that whichever on us lost would have to feel bad? Now don't go to raisin' the pile no more?"

For a few moments Fred acted according to his adversary's advice, and as he lost nearly every game,

he felt the need of caution; suddenly, however, he got a handful of cards that made his heart bound, and he exclaimed:

"I'll go a fifty dollars on this."

"Now what sort ov a fellow be you?" asked his adversary in an aggrieved tone, "to agree on a game with a dollar limit, and then spring a fifty dollars raise on a poor mule driver? I told yer before I don't take no dares, an tell yer now like I did then, that I've got a middlin' good hand myself, but what's the good of us doin' what one ur tuther of us is got to be sorry fur? Them's my senterments."

"I won't cry if I lose," said Fred tauntingly, "but if you haven't fifty dollars with you I'll agree——"

"Don't be generous till yer hev to, young man," said the stranger, taking from his pocket a roll of bills, and looking through them. "I don't 'pear to hev no fifty, but here's a hundred."

"Make it a hundred, then," said Fred, laying down nearly all the money he had.

"How you do fly off!" said his adversary. "A minute ago you was talkin' 'bout fifty; now you've planked a hundred. Well, ez I said before, I don't take no dares; so here goes. What yer got?"

Fred's eyes danced as he displayed four tens, but suddenly his face paled, for the stranger, with a sad shake of his frowsy hand and a reproachful

look in his gray eyes, showed four kings, at the same time he cautiously covered the money with his right hand.

Fred arose abruptly and walked aside; the stranger followed him and said, appealingly:

"Now what did I tell yer? Uv course, one uv us hed to feel bad; but yer needn't go off mad. Oh, say, look here, now—yer promised yer wouldn't cry ef yer lost; now see what yer doin'!"

"You'd cry, perhaps," said Fred, hastily wiping his eyes, "if you were two thousand miles from home, intending to start by the first train, and then made yourself fool enough to gamble away all your money."

"Sho, is that so? Ain't got nothin' left."

"Nothing, ten dollars, and no business, property or friends to get any more from."

"I'll be durned if that ain't pretty rough. Tell yer what I'll do, I'll give you back ten dollars uv this, and the first green-horn yer see comin' in here, go fur him, git him in a game and clean him out—jest like I did you, yer know. Here yer be. So long," and the winner sauntered awkwardly away and out of the door. Fred did not know what to do, so like most men of his kind when in misfortune, he took a drink.

"Did he hurt you much?" asked the barkeeper, as he set the bottle asked for.

"Eh?" said Fred.

"Did the old man win much of you?"

"About all I had."

"H'm—that's too bad," said the barkeeper. "I wanted to keep you out of his hands, supposin' from your puttin' up your ticker and shiner, that you weren't any too well fixed, but I couldn't catch your eye. He's lightnin' on a tender-foot, he is."

"He? Who is he?" asked Fred.

"He's Yank Hovey, one of the sharpest gamblers in these parts, an' that's sayin' a good deal."

"Why, he told me he was a mule driver," said Fred, in wonder.

"Did, eh?" laughed the barkeeper. "Well, that was because he thought you was green enough to believe him. Have a look at a New York paper? —it's just come in from the East."

Fred took the paper, looked quickly for a notice addressed to himself and found the following:

Ethel will go crazy if Fred don't hurry home.

PHIL.

Fred dropped the paper and dashed out of the saloon. He found that darkness had fallen during the hours in which he had been lounging in the gambling hell.

CHAPTER XIII.

DESPERATE.

FRED hurried through the streets, jostling many pedestrians and eliciting much racy profanity, but

he heeded no one; his only desire was to get away from the glare of lights, away from all people of every kind. A side street seemed to end in darkness not far away, so up this he dashed.

As soon as he felt that he was entirely alone he exploded in a volley of curses at Yank Hovey, at the faro dealer and at the first person who had ever taught him a game of cards. He cursed the officer whose attempt to arrest him had driven him from home; he cursed the first discoverer of the country to which he had come; he cursed Carisol for having made him extravagant, Malleson for having taught him what use could be made of an endorsement, all his club friends, for having helped him to waste money—in short, he cursed every one connected in any way with any of his carelessnesses and sins—every one but himself.

When his rage had spent itself he felt utterly exhausted, and as the terrible advertisement came to his mind he burst into tears and felt that in his grief and remorse he would lose his reason. What now could he do? He might write Phil for money, but he would have to wait ten days at least for a reply. He might telegraph, but suppose the advertisement was a devilish trap set by a detective, and were to become the means of his returning to arrest and disgrace?

One thing at least he could do, he could communicate with Phil by telegraph, through the private

code that the firm used for cable dispatches on business and which mere curiosity had prompted Fred to memorize in important particulars. He would not need to sign this with his right name, for whatever signature he used Phil would know that but one man could be the sender. He could signify that he was alive and well, would soon return, and needed money at once.

He sent the dispatch, signing it "Railroad," to blind anyone but Royal who might see it, and he addressed it to Royal's house.

This operation pacified Fred greatly, for he knew the word would reach his wife immediately after Phil received it, so for an hour he paced the street and earnestly prayed to Heaven to stay Ethel's heart until word from her husband could reach her. The horrible thought occurred to him that the newspaper in which he had read the advertisement was five or six days old; what might not have happened to the dear woman since it was printed!

He thought, feared and prayed until his mind became a mere blank and his whole nervous system was so exhausted that he could scarcely keep his feet. He strolled into a bar-room and took, for the first time in his life, a needed glass of brandy. Then he began to wonder how he should maintain existence until money could reach him from Phil, for, prominent merchant though he was, he did not know that money transfers could be made by tele-

graph except through the banks. He had but a few dollars left; it was too little to gamble with. He had a few articles of clothing at his hotel, and thought perhaps he could turn them into money at a pawn-broker's place of which he had seen a sign, but he doubted whether they would bring enough to cover the bill which he daily expected to receive from his landlord.

It occurred to him that to be safe and undisturbed at his hotel, so that he might be there to receive his remittance when it came, it would be well to have a strong assurance by wire from Phil that money would be sent, so he returned to the telegraph office to make himself penniless by sending a supplementary dispatch. The receiver, as he took the message from Fred, said:

"I think a message is just coming over the wires for you; wait a moment."

Fred waited, yet watched, still fearing trickery and an officer. But in a minute or two his fears vanished like smoke, for the dispatch handed to him read:

To "Railroad" Silver House, Leadville.

"Glory Hallelujah. Expect two hundred by telegraph to-morrow. ROYAL."

Fred was amazed, but not too much to ask questions until he learned that money deposited with the Company in New York in the morning would be ready for delivery at Leadville at nine

o'clock, there being two or three hours' difference of time in favor of the Western city.

Fred left the office without a care on his mind, and he poured forth thanks in profusion to Heaven. Evidently the advertisements were genuine, the forgery had been settled and the story kept from the public. What a fool he was for having left New York at all! He might have taken a couple of rooms at a hotel and remained in them, secluded from view, until he could have communicated with Royal and through him effected a compromise with Malleson or whoever had acted as complainant in the forgery case. Then, too, he might have kept Ethel assured of his safety and returned to her much sooner. And then he would not have had to suffer that enraging, humiliating scene with Carisol. But perhaps it was better that he was rid of her and that his dear, pure, suffering wife could not longer have a rival. But stay; he had confessed—Oh, the fool that he had been!—He had confessed to Carisol that he had committed forgery; he was still in her power, so he would have to be civil to her and placate her. After all, thought Fred, Carisol was a pleasant friend to have; she was handsome, used correct grammar and did not get drunk; not as much could be said of all women of her class. He would be glad to see her again—to see the boys at the club—in short to see all of his old associates

—it seemed cruel that he must be separated from them for almost a week yet.

One thing he could do at once, though; it was to arrange with his loan agent, the barkeeper to whom he had pledged his watch and ring, to return his property on receipt of whatever might be the sum demanded. He started out to find the man, but as nearly every building in the neighbourhood was a combination of rum shop and gambling hell, and he did not remember in which of the series he had been, he went from one to another in search of his man.

As he entered one place he heard music so lively that he made his way behind the swinging doors to see what was going on. He found a large room, uncarpeted, and undecorated except by the cheap candlesticks that were stuck profusely about the walls; fifty or sixty people, of whom five of every six were men, hugged the walls, while in the center of the floor several couples were waltzing. Everything looked rude, common, cheerless and vulgar; the only men who did not appear shabby were offensive through overdressing, and most of the women appeared either brazen or dismal-faced. Fred was just turning to go when his eye was caught for a second by one of the waltzers, who seemed more spirited and comely than any of her companions. A glance from any woman's eye would have been somewhat cheering to Fred in so rude a

part of the world, so instead of departing the young man lounged along the wall line, followed with his eye the gyrations of the woman who had looked at him, and before long he resolved to seek her hand for the next waltz, just for the fun of the thing; it would be a jolly thing to tell the boys about when he reached New York.

But his plan seemed doomed to failure, for when the dance was ended the gentlemen escorted their partners to a small bar in the corner for refreshments and Fred noticed that each couple took a bottle of champagne. If such was the custom of the house he would abandon hope, for the refreshment, even at New York prices, was beyond his means; he had not the price of a single bottle. Through the crowd of men who pressed toward the ladies to secure partners he could detect inviting glances, meant for him, in the face of the woman with whom he wanted to dance, but what could he do?

While he wondered the fiddlers began another waltz, and the girl, whirled out into the floor by another partner, looked soft reproaches at Fred. This was too much for the fellow's susceptible head, and he frantically wondered if he might not stake his two or three remaining dollars at a gambling table next door and win the price of a bottle of wine. While he wondered he saw a man turn from the bar and thrust into the side pocket of his coat some notes that he had received in change.

Lost to every feeling except that of wanting to dance with the woman who had flattered his vanity by indicating preference for him, Fred followed the man carefully and within five minutes he had successfully performed his first operation as a pickpocket. His conscience did not suffer in the least, although he graciously resolved to remember the man's face, follow him when the evening's sport ended, and, having found out who he was, return him the money anonymously next day when he received his remittance.

When the dance ended Fred was at the girl's side almost in a second and was accepted as her partner for the next waltz, and he afterward retained her for several waltzes in succession. He began to encounter black looks from other men, but his head filled so rapidly with bad champagne that he did not heed them; as for the girl, she enjoyed them; there was little else left in life for her to enjoy except the feeling that men contended for her and suffered because of her.

Suddenly Fred found the stolen money exhausted; the discovery did not trouble him much, for between his previous success, his subsequent drinking and his desire to continue the revel he felt equal to anything. But wine had made him careless and awkward; he explored a pocket so bunglingly that several men shouted "Thief!" And the owner of the pocket detected him in the act and seized him. In an in-

stant there was a scuffle and an uproar; which the proprietor promptly quelled by acting as policeman and claiming Fred as his prisoner. The girl, jeered by the other women, who a few moments before had been jealous of her, cursed and spat upon the partner in whose arms she had recently felt almost happy, and as the proprietor and the man who had detected Fred started for the street with their prisoner, a dozen or two men followed him.

Fred was sobered by the gravity of the situation. He did not know where he was being led—whether to jail or to summary punishment, such as he had sometimes heard was inflicted in mining towns. But he saw every person whom he knew in any way, for his landlord, the telegraph operator and the barkeeper who had loaned him money, all happened to be in the street just then. The ordeal was too severe, so with a sudden jerk he freed himself from the two men and dashed away like a deer, and turned up the dark side street from which he had come but two hours before. Several men followed him, shouting "Stop, thief!" And when they could see him no longer they discharged their pistols into the darkness. A number of shots were wasted, but one which took effect in his leg gave him great discomfort. He dared not stop; he hobbled and limped along until he could see scarcely a light of the town behind him; then he began to peer about for shelter. He cautiously approached a shadow that had the

shape of a hut, and found the building abandoned, so he crawled through the doorway. He could see nothing; his feet informed him that the earthen floor was rough, but no matter; safe from pursuit the son of honorable parents, the husband of a pure, loving wife, the prominent New York merchant, the companion of women of the gutter, the detected pickpocket, dropped upon the floor, and between exhaustion and reaction of the liquor he had swallowed he fell asleep without complaining of the quality of his bed.

CHAPTER XIV.

STARTING FOR HOME.

FRED'S wound pained him somewhat when he awoke from his hard couch, but he was annoyed far more by aching limbs and an aching head, and he felt also an aching void where he should have placed some supper the evening before. Half stupid and half desperate he staggered out of the hut and made his way to a neighboring village, where he spent some small silver, which was all the money that remained to him, for a glass of liquor and an insufficient breakfast. Even this he did not swallow with comfort, for the man who served him stood aloof and eyed him suspiciously.

He left the place and earnestly endeavored to

do some thinking, for he realized that he was now entirely without resources; he had not even a change of clothing. To go back to his hotel at Leadville to claim the money from Royal, that probably was already awaiting his order, would expose him to risk of arrest. His only hope was to reach some other town where there was a telegraphic transfer office and appeal again to his faithful book-keeper.

But how was he to do it? The nearest place he could think of was Denver, a hundred and fifty miles away; he could not pay his way there, he could not pay for a dispatch to New York; he could not even pay for another meal. He would be obliged to walk, wherever he went, unless he could beg rides in wagons that he might meet by the way, and how long could he walk on an empty stomach? And what would teamsters and everyone else say to see a well-dressed man limping along the road without a pack of any kind? Might they not think him just what he was—a runaway thief?

But perhaps he did not look as stylish as he had done; he remembered that he had been sleeping on the ground and that there were probably two bullet holes in his clothing. He quickly removed his coat and looked at the shoulder, but could see no hole; evidently the ball had struck him only hard enough to bruise him. He looked at the back of the leg that had been hit, and saw it had been wounded badly enough to leave a large blood stain on his

trowsers. He would have to make his way to water and wash the spot away.

While brushing his coat with his hand, to remove the dirt that it had taken from his earthen bed, he dropped the garment, and as he picked it up the contents of one of the pockets fell out.

Among them were photographs of his wife and child. He had not looked at them for days; his heart had been callous to old associations, but now, as the two faces appeared unexpectedly before him, he instantly surrendered himself to their influence, though more through weakness than intention. Recollections of the past came hurrying into his mind, making him feel wistful, then wretched, then desperate. He *must* return to his home again; he would do anything to see Ethel once more. There came into his mind all the strange accidents, of which he had read in novels, by which penniless men suddenly found help and fortune; why should not something of the sort befall him? Anywhere else, he was sure, he would find some way of extricating himself, but what could he do in a forlorn mining town, where there was no business but that connected with a mine?

He limped back toward Leadville, desperately determining to disguise himself as much as possible, go to the telegraph office, tell his story, collect his money, and trust to the humanity of the clerk not to expose him. But everyone whom he met eyed

him strangely, or Fred thought they did, so soon he abandoned his intention and retraced his steps. The results were no pleasanter; people might wonder why a man who was too well dressed to be a prospector, and too shabby to be a speculator, and too "green" looking to be an outcast gambler, could be limbing to Leadville unless he had been in difficulty and needed a doctor; but why such a person should be going away was still more strange. Fred had learned that in the rude West nobody cared for anybody, but he quickly assured himself this was all a mistake, and in simple bravado he again turned about and limped his way to the city.

On his way he saw by the roadside a dreadful old wool hat, probably discarded by some teamster; he immediately put it on his head, throwing away his own. With the brim of the hat drawn down over his eyes he rightly imagined himself so well disguised that no one would at first sight recognize him. He entered the town by streets which were least frequented, and reached the telegraph office without detection.

The operator with whom he had transacted his business the day before looked at him carelessly and said:

"Well?"

"I got into a scrape in a hell last night," said Fred rapidly and in a very low tone; "I was drunk and didn't know what I was doing; I'm not that

kind of a man when I'm sober. I've got a wife in the East that's dying to see me, and I want—"

"Yes, yes—I see," said the clerk, briskly. "You want a quarter to get a drink with. Well, our man that attends to tramps has gone to Europe; drop in about this time next year and maybe he'll do something for you."

"You don't understand," said Fred. "I'm the man that telegraphed East for money yesterday; here's the answer I got; you told me the money would be here this morning, don't you remember?"

The man looked at Fred keenly for a moment and answered:

"Holy smoke! So you are. Trying to look like a native, eh?"

Then the clerk wrote an identification on the back of Fred's dispatch, referred him to the proper desk, and within five minutes the fugitive was some distance from the main street with two hundred dollars in his pocket and so much hope in his heart that he was not much troubled by the pain in his head.

He greatly wanted to improve his personal appearance before he entered a railway train, and he wanted to redeem his watch and diamond, but, preferring to take no risk of detection, he kept himself as secluded as possible until train time; then he bought his ticket in haste, keeping his face well hidden, and six hours later he found himself in Denver, where nobody knew him.

The trip did not seem long, but it gave Fred time enough for much and varying mental exercise. When fairly started from the scene of his disappointments and disgrace he devoted some moments to devout thanksgiving and prayer. Then he worshiped the pictures of his wife and child, hiding them under the lappel of his coat so he alone could see them. When finally he replaced them in his pocket there came unbidden a wish that he had also a picture of Carisol. He cursed himself for the wish, yet he found himself recalling the woman's face. Never mind, he would have his revenge when he returned to New York. He would write her that his last visit and the revelations he made were merely to test her regard for him; that there had been no truth in his story, but it had shown him that she was utterly heartless and a mere piece of merchandise. She, finding him really in New York, maintaining his usual style, would apologize most abjectly, and beg him not to abandon her, but would he heed the mercenary creature's appeal? Not he; still, he would not refuse to see her, for she certainly was worth a look.

Even Fred's careless mind detected some inconsistencies and dangers in this line of thought, so he endeavored to change it. He began to plan his daily life as it should be when he returned to New York. He would be at his desk every morning at nine o'clock and remain there until four. He would

tell all his personal friends who called that he was very busy and would prefer to see them at his house in the evening. He would take his midday luncheon alone and as rapidly as possible. He could not give up all old associations—he did not think it advisable, but he would give only one night a week to his clubs, the remainder of his time should be devoted to his much-abused wife. In short, he would re-establish himself in the position from which he had fallen. He longed to reach Denver so he might get on a through train for the East; might telegraph his wife the very day and hour he would reach home.

So much virtuous resolve in so little time was terribly exhausting to a man who seldom used the nobler portion of his mind, so Fred began to feel very tired of thought and very desirous of some one to talk to. His appearance did not justify him in speaking to anyone who looked like a gentleman or a solid business man, and some advances he made toward a rough-looking prospector were promptly resented. At last he suceeded in engaging a brakeman in conversation, and before he knew it he was listening to many stories of a character he had just forsworn. He was told that on reaching Denver he would be obliged to wait at least twelve hours for an east-bound train; he also learned of company in which he could spend his extra time without fear of having it hang heavy on his hands.

Fred was disgusted that his informant should imagine him a person who would desire low amusements, yet within a few minutes he found himself asking particulars with some interest; instead of being disgusted by this also, he failed to see anything strange about it, and when his conscience forced him to perceive the inconsistency of his mental operations he explained to himself that, after all, morality was only a relative term; what might seem and be quite reprehensible in New York, where a man's influence in society and upon the young was always to be thought of, for good reasons wear quite another complexion at Denver.

Long before the train stopped Fred had convinced himself that after his recent troubles, and right at the threshold of a new life, a simple "lark" would do no harm.

The details of what followed his arrival would not interest the reader, for dissipation is never sightly or even original. It is enough to say that in the course of the day he got into a quarrel that led to blows and then to shooting, and Fred, seeing his unknown enemy fall and hearing him groan "I'm killed," proceeded for the third time in his life to rapidly become a fugitive from justice.

CHAPTER XV.

HONEST WITH HIMSELF.

FRED'S disappearance, thanks to a saddled horse he found tied in front of a saloon and which he did not scruple to steal, was immediate and thorough. As soon as fear of pursuit faded from his mind he fell to repenting, moralizing and self-excusing, as had been his life-long habit after any kind of wrong-doing. For the first time in his life, however, his obsequious conscience failed to find excuses for him. Murder was a sin not easily disguised, and his attempts to persuade himself that he had done the deed in self-defense were utter failures. From force of habit he began protesting to Heaven that he hated the sins that had led him to his awful crime, but he sternly stopped himself and informed Heaven that he had lied; that his desires were coarse, his will weak and his whole life that of a hypocrite. He told himself that there was no difference between his character now and when he was at home; that he had always been lazy, pleasure-loving, temporizing and untrue to his principles, and that what he had called his respectability had been merely reflections from his father, his wife and his money.

This self-flagellation eased his mind somewhat, but did not prepare the way for him to regain his former good opinion of himself, for the shadow of

the gallows rose before him and would not down at his bidding. The thought that he might be captured, taken to prison, tried, condemned and hanged kept him in abject terror, yet he did not dare throw himself upon Heaven and ask mercy, as he had done many a time before, for he felt that he had abused Heaven beyond the limit of forbearance. But he must do something. He had heard of Western men turning out in hundreds to hunt a murderer, so his own chance of escape might be small should pursuers get upon his track. Even if he reached the railroad and made his way to New York, as he still had money enough to do, he would not be safe, for he had entered his real name on the register of a Denver hotel, and by this he might be traced. His only hope was to hide himself; should he be overtaken by a crowd there were still some charges in the revolver he had bought only two or three hours before using it; he could avoid further disgrace by ending his own worthless life.

Then, in the stolidity which either protracted fear or a severe debauch can produce, and which becomes more intense when both causes combine, Fred wondered why his best plan would not be to take his own life at once. He had been of no use in the world; he had been untrue to his father, his wife, his child, the woman who should have been his wife, her child, himself, everyone. Stripped of the material surroundings that had been his until

within a few weeks, he appeared to himself a common drunkard and thief. He had no longer even pretended confidence in his ability to change his habits. He could not go to his wife for fear of detection; he could not have her join him anywhere without giving the police a clue to his whereabouts; meanwhile Ethel would be miserable as long as he lived and she could not be with him.

He resolved to shuffle off his mortal coil as soon as he could find means to write and mail a letter to Ethel.

At daylight he turned his horse from the road into a small ravine and, taking out note-book and pencil, began writing rapidly. He could not tell his wife the whole truth; if by some lying he could save her unnecessary misery, it would not perceptibly increase the budget of lies he had already told. He wrote her that he had suffered severe business reverses that had driven him from home in spite of his better sense, that his mind was so affected that he was at times afraid of himself and dangerous to others, that he wanted to return to his home but dared not while in his present condition, and that he knew she and her child would be safer and happier if he were out of the world. Then his heart and his pencil eagerly took up sweet reminiscences, by all of which he begged the wife to believe in the sincerity and tenderness of her husband's devotion.

He tore the leaves from the book, folded them, scrawled Ethel's name and address on the outside and placed them in his pocket. Then he gazed long at the portraits of his wife and child. He wished he might weep over them, but the fountains of his eyes seemed sealed; he wished his heart might once more throb affectionately toward them, but he seemed utterly destitute of feeling. He abruptly replaced the picture, took out his pistol, looked at it without the faintest fear or nervousness—

But stay—there was one thing he could do to lessen his disgrace; he would not die a horse-thief. He led the animal into the road, turned his head toward Denver, and loosed him; but the horse, being very hungry, returned to the ravine and began again to nibble at the tips of shrubs. Fred cut a cottonwood sapling and chased the animal, giving him several sharp cuts; the frightened horse dashed toward the road, but Fred suddenly stopped, for he stumbled over a human body.

The horse found the road, and as the sound of his rapid footfalls died away Fred peered at the figure before him. A single look showed that the man was dead, for his face had been disfigured, beyond chance of recognition, by some animal, and yet, the would-be suicide felt a sense of companionship. The man had evidently died as Fred intended to do, for a pistol lay beside him. Who or

what he was Fred did not care to discover; he was willing that the man's secret should be dead with him, as he hoped his own might be.

Gradually the thought came to him that it would not be pleasant for him to think, in whatever spiritual hereafter he might find himself, that his remains would perhaps become as unsightly as those before him. He began to wish he might live and yet be thought dead. Ha! Why might he not do so, by putting some of his effects in the dead man's pockets, or better yet, changing clothes with the corpse, and thus seemingly identify the body as his own, while the dead man's clothes would afford him some disguise?

He began the work at once; it was grim business, but he was stolid enough at heart to rather enjoy it; besides, the dead man's clothes were so much worse than his own that he experienced a little rise of spirits in his new hope of security from detection. The pockets of the clothing he put on himself contained nothing, and Fred resolved that he would take nothing that could identify him. He looked carefully over all his papers, his note-book, his pocket-book, and replaced them, all but the picture of his wife and child he thrust into his breast; he could not entirely cut himself off from the past. Then he began to drag the body to the roadside, where it might be quickly discovered, but he stopped suddenly. What would Ethel think if the property

on the corpse were sent to her with his letter? What would she think if the pictures he always carried near his heart were not among them? Hastily he snatched the pictures forth once more, pressed his lips to them, and placed them with the corpse. Then, at last, he broke down; he had cut the last visible tie that bound him to the old life, and he felt as utterly dead to all he had known or loved as if he were the lifeless remains before him.

But he did not dare to remain long in the neighborhood of his recent crime. He dragged the counterfeit of himself to the side of the road, walked rapidly toward Denver until he saw a wagon approaching, then stopped and the driver dismounted. Fred waited until the driver was turning the body cautiously with his foot and then asked:

"Who is hurt?"

"Some gambler that's cleaned out, I suppose," said the man.

"Perhaps he's a decent man that has been shot and robbed."

"No knowing," said the driver, getting into his wagon.

"You're not going to leave a fellowman's remains here, are you?" asked Fred.

"You darned fool," said the driver, angrily, "What use d'ye s'pose I've got for a dead man?"

"None I suppose, but maybe his family has.

You might make something by taking him along and writing or telegraphing them."

The driver stared at Fred and finally answered:

"You look as if you belonged out here, but you talk like a tenderfoot. Fellers that's found dead in the road don't have no families."

"Don't talk until you know," said Fred sharply. "Let's go through his pockets, and see if there is not something to tell who he is." So saying Fred got out and pretended to examine one paper after another; then it struck him to slyly pencil Royal's name and address on the inside of the memorandum book.

"Here are papers and letters that'll tell who he is in the course of time. See here, if you haven't any heart I have, and I've five dollars that I'll give you to take the fellow along to Boulder, if that's where you're going, and I've got another five that I'm man enough to spend in telegraphing his friends."

The driver jumped off his seat, exclaiming:

"If you're that much of a fool, help me pile him on."

The body was lifted into the wagon, the two men mounted the seat and drove to Boulder, where Fred found the telegraph office and sent the following message to Royal:

"A man in whose pocket are letters and memoranda that seem to show his name to be Frederic Valtrey has been found

dead. Looks like suicide. Your name and address are in his memorandum book, and there's a letter to Mrs. Valtrey. Do you know anything about him? JONAS BROWN."

In several hours, which Fred spent beside the remains for fear that something would be stolen from the pockets, he received the following:

"Have remains properly coffined and sent to me. Telegraph me what money will be needed. Send me all his papers. I am his business manager. PHILIP ROYAL."

Meanwhile an inquest had been held and verdict of suicide rendered. Fred showed Royal's dispatch to the coroner, saw the papers, memoranda and pictures packed, addressed, and placed in the express office; then he telegraphed:

"Remains unfit to be forwarded. Will have them decently interred here. All effects have been sent you by express."

Before dark the remains of Fred's counterfeit, in a plain wooden coffin, was buried. The hearse was a plain wagon; as it had no seat the driver sat on the coffin, and so did the only mourner. As Fred read and re-read the inscription which he himself had written for the cover he tried to laugh, but the effort was a failure; his mind was sufficiently awake to realize that probably at that moment his wife was in extreme misery, and the thought crazed him so that he made haste to drown in rum the few fragments that remained of his conscience.

CHAPTER XVI.

FINDING HIS LEVEL.

WHATEVER of manliness had survived Frederic Valtrey's escapades seemed to have been buried with the coffin that held his counterfeit. While the rude box remained above ground the man whose name was on it was somewhat uneasy, but when he felt that all trace of his old self had been obliterated, that the first agony of his wife's grief must have passed, it was with a positive sense of relief that he regarded himself as a being without character, name or responsibilities. There was a stubby growth of several days upon his chin; by letting it grow he could make his face unrecognizable to his nearest friend. Even if he had not the officers of the law to fear he would still prefer to be as he was, an outcast and an unknown, for he saw himself as he was and as unconsciously he had since boyhood been preparing himself to be—a man strong in his animal desires, weak in his morals and needing only to lose his natural generosity and amiability to become as brutal a villain as circumstances and inclination might dictate. Why should he bemoan his lost wife and child? They were provided for; the business would take care of them handsomely and they would be far happier without him than with him.

As for himself, he was free and he still had more than a hundred dollars in his pocket. What would

happen when the money was gone he did not know or care; that for the present he was assured of food and lodging, and was not in any way of unusual enough appearance to excite suspicion or inquiry, was enough.

He returned to Denver and devoted weeks to stupid, vulgar, degrading dissipation. Determined to make his money last as long as possible he contented himself with living and moving among men whose outward appearance was as bad as his own, and he continued in this course until he was penniless. The discovery of his poverty did not astonish him; he had come to be utterly careless of the morrow. When he had spent not only his last dollar, but his last dime, he sauntered slowly about, looking for a chance to find some more money in some way; he would earn it, if not too much trouble, but he would be entirely satisfied to steal it if he could do so without risk of detection. As a last resort he would sell his revolver, but to that one remaining bit of property he clung with the affection peculiar to degraded characters who depend on weapons instead of manliness.

He did not quickly fall upon luck of any sort. He found no money, nor any drunken men who could be robbed with impunity, so he lounged through the commoner rum shops and gambling hells scrutinizing the floors in the hope of finding money that had been dropped. This plan did not

yield anything but provocation, for he caught odor of liquors and an occasional good cigar, and sense of smell is extremely acute in natures wholly animal. At a crowded bar he saw a drunken fellow set his half-drained glass down, while he endeavored to make an address on the local political situation. Fred slyly abstracted the glass and emptied it, to his own great satisfaction. He looked for other chances of the same kind and found them. Then he longed intensely to smoke. He watched his chance to get a cigar as he had found the liquor. He succeeded, for an excited politician dropped a half-burned "weed" on the floor and Fred did not hesitate to pick it up. Then he felt so happy that he assumed a dashing attitude that his attire did not support and made a tour of the dance houses to see what now seemed to him to be the most desirable order of amusement.

In one of these places he saw people standing about listlessly, with no one at the piano; with the impudence and recklessness of semi-intoxication he sat down at the instrument and rattled off a lively waltz. The floor was alive in a moment, and Fred, pleased by the excitement he had caused, played more and more rapidly until everyone in the room was whirling, men making partners of men when they could find none more desirable.

Suddenly Fred abruptly stopped and turned on the piano stool; every one looked at him as if they

wanted more, but he took off his hat and passed it as he had seen vagabond musicians do. The result surprised him, for he obtained quite a pocketful of money. Then the proprietor of the place came to him and begged him to continue playing; the regular musician had suddenly become sick. A price was agreed upon, with a supplementary payment in the shape of a bottle of whisky from which to drink when he felt so disposed and for an hour longer Ethel Wynne's husband played that two or three scores of brutal men and abandoned women might dance; he not only played for them, but keenly enjoyed all he saw and heard.

When on the next morning he counted the proceeds of the previous night's work he was astonished, and hardly knew what to do with the money. It occurred to him that he was tired of Denver and the mining country in general; he had money enough to reach some place farther East by taking the emigrant train, so East he would go; liquor would be better and cheaper, and the necessities of life would not cost as much as at Denver.

So he went as far east as St. Louis and regretted that he had done so. He easily found his proper level there, but nothing exciting ever occurred. The rum shops and other low resorts were not as attractive as in the mining cities; besides, in Denver he could go into any hell, whereas in St. Louis his dress excluded him from most places where the

patrons did not all appear as shabby as he. Continuous absorption of bad liquor had made him so pugnacious that he enjoyed quarreling and even fighting, but while at Denver nobody interfered in fights that occurred indoors, at St. Louis the bar-room custom was to call a policeman whenever trouble began.

Nevertheless, Fred managed to get much animal gratification out of life while his money lasted. He drank and smoked leisurely but steadily during his waking hours, he went sometimes to the cheapest theaters, and he gradually discovered the rum shops where a man could lounge longest for the price of a single drink. But even these cheap dissipations drained his pocket in time; what to do then he scarcely knew, but he well knew that what he did not want to do was work. He soon learned the tricks of the tramps who were beggars, and he did not hesitate to avail himself of them, but there were days when the springs of benevolence seemed to dry up and then Fred suffered terribly from enforced abstinence. He had already learned to sleep in sheds, covered doorways and unfinished houses without suffering much, but to go hungry and thirsty was something at which his nature rebelled so violently that he was equal to anything but working for his living. He became a not unskillful sneak-thief, but the class of property he could find was not that which brought much money, so his straits gradually

became more frequent and longer. He finally brought himself to labor, for a few minutes at a time, to satisfy his immediate cravings; he would sweep the sidewalk in front of a rum shop for a glass of ale, or carry a traveller's hand bag for a few cents, but his exertion always came to an end as soon as the demand of the hour was satisfied.

In his aimless, listless condition he slowly lost even knowledge of the days of the week and the month, so it was not until the weather began to grow cold and the first snowfall came that he realized he had been away from New York a full year. To think of the changes that had occurred and the harm and misery he had caused troubled him very little; occasionally he spent a miserable hour, but at such times he exerted himself to any extent to get rum in which to drown his recollections, and usually he succeeded. He had just one abiding regret—it was that he had not drawn on Royal, before he pretended suicide, for money enough to start a small rum shop; as owner of such an establishment he felt that he could be truly happy.

Slowly he came to have an assortment of haunts at which he could hope to occasionally earn a few cents. The railroad stations sometimes produced something, if he reached them when an express train was just coming in and many passengers wanted things carried. The steamboat levees also proved

worthy of a little attention, and during rainy nights he occasionally got a few cents by opening carriage doors at theaters. On one occasion when, after opening and closing a carriage for a couple, the gentleman, whose face was turned toward the lady, did not see the dirty hand and ragged sleeve that were thrust through the window, but the lady murmuring, "What a forlorn-looking wretch!" gave Fred a half dollar. Usually Fred avoided looking into the faces of well-dressed people, but on this occasion the size of the gift surprised him and the lady's exclamation piqued him, so he raised his eyes. By the light that shone from the lamps into the carriage he saw the face of Carisol.

Wildly he dashed the money into the gutter. The carriage rolled away, and he ran after it, roaring oaths and imprecations at its fair occupant. He soon found himself breathless and was obliged to abandon the chase, but his nature was aroused as it had not been before in a long time, and he strode along the street regardless of the rain and gave his feelings vent in words. That she, of all beings alive, should call him a forlorn-looking wretch!—that she should give him money! Oh, the fiend! He would find her if she was in the city; he would watch the principal streets for her; and when he saw her he would fly at her and kill her. Kill; yes; as there was already murder on his soul he did not care what he might do.

He raged on until he was utterly exhausted. The rain had soaked him to the skin; there was no shelter near by; the streets were deserted, and Fred's relapse from excitement had thrown him into the horrors. What could he do? He never could lie down, cold and wet as he was, and sleep, but to remain awake would be to think, which would be worse than dying. If he had only a few cents—a single dime—he could, by buying a glass of rum, lie on the floor of a warm room until daylight. In absolute desperation he accosted the very few persons whom he met, but all turned a deaf ear to him, and with the curse he bestowed upon them he included one for Carisol, who had offered him money. He hoped the woman would be deserted by whoever was now her protector; that she would be brought down to poverty; that she would become a tramp, like himself—she, the woman who had called him a forlorn wretch and offered him money.

Money? Stay; why should he consider it hers? Women like her had nothing that was really their own. The money she had placed in his hand she had of course obtained from some man as generous and affectionate as he himself had been. He was sorry for the fellow, why, then, should he be afraid to touch his money?

In ten minutes the discarded lover of Carisol was again in front of the theater and groping eagerly in the mud of the gutter, searching for the money

that his mistress of a year before had put in his hand for pity's sake. He found it, and then he hurried away to a vile den where tramps drank and snored from midnight to daylight.

CHAPTER XVII.

COMING TO HIS SENSES.

When Fred awoke in the morning it was after long and vigorous persuasion by a man whom he did not remember to have seen before. This was not, however, a matter that seemed to demand serious thought, so he endeavored to sleep again, but the man treated him so roughly that he got upon his feet and endeavored to fight.

"Here, here!" said the man gruffly; "stop this; you've already done enough fighting to fix you for awhile. Aren't you going to behave yourself? Well, then—" the sentence ended abruptly as the man stepped behind Fred, throttled him, and shouted "Bill!" Another man appeared quickly, and in less than half a minute Fred was handcuffed.

"What's all this about?" asked Fred, looking around him with eyes that would not stay open more than a second or two at a time.

"It means you've been drunk, and you've cut another man with a knife, and you're sure of a two or three years in State Prison, even if you plead

guilty, but if you try to play innocent you'll get more."

"Where am I?" asked Fred, utterly dazed by the information he had received.

"You're in a cell now," said the officer, "but you'll soon be before a magistrate. After that you're likely to come back here again for a while, but you'll soon be railroaded to the State Prison. How do you like the view?"

Fred did not like it at all. Apathetic and careless as he had come to be in most respects, he was still strong in the abhorrence, peculiar to all low animals, of restraint and exertion; in prison he would have to submit to both. He looked wildly about, during every stage of his removal from the cell to the court, for chances of escape, but he found none. He was arraigned, pleaded not guilty, and was held to await the result of his victim's injuries.

During weeks that grew into months he remained in the jail, and, after fear that he had committed another murder had passed, he rather liked the experience, for he had nothing to do and enough to eat. Lack of drink told severely on him at first, and not to smoke was a severe privation; still, he could fall asleep at any time without much effort. When brought to trial he had no counsel, nor use for any, for all evidence was entirely against him. By a mighty effort he rallied himself and made a

plea for mercy, telling the story he had told his wife and Royal; that business troubles had made him at times insane and irresponsible. He talked wonderfully well, as if the faculties that had lain dormant for a year or two had awoke and were all coming into play at once. Judge, jury, lawyers and court-room loungers all looked in surprise at the unsightly tramp who was talking with a fluency, correctness and force seldom heard in courts. Fred noted the effect he was producing, and his long-suppressed vanity awoke also. He would astonish these people still more; he would make himself an object of interest by seeming to be a mystery, so he raised his hand and solemnly swore before Heaven that, vile though he might be in appearance, he was at that moment the sole head and owner of a large business in New York.

There was silence for a moment after Fred, utterly exhausted and almost hysterical, sat down. It was broken by the Judge saying:

"The Court will suspend sentence for a week, if you so desire, to give you an opportunity to prove what you have said. Will you give your rightful name?"

"Oh, my God!—no!" Fred shrieked, burying his face in his hands.

There was another moment of silence, for everyone was painfully affected. Again the Judge spoke:

"The Court will accord you a private examination, if you like."

"No! No! No!" exclaimed the prisoner, from behind his hands; "I cannot say anything; I dare not."

"Then," said the Judge, "I must sentence you to three years' confinement in the State Prison."

Fred received his sentence in silence, not even changing his position until an officer tapped him on the shoulder and led him away.

To trace his prison life would be merely to record a series of uneventful days. He did not suffer much except when memory and conscience occasionally awoke. His sentence did not impose hard labor and, as he gave his occupation as "merchant," he was put at clerical work, which he was sensible enough to do well, for the position relieved him of many restraints and allowed him to talk to some people who were not convicts. This privilege was the worst thing that could have befallen him, for the few officials who were compelled to meet him found he was a capital story teller, and they were not above being companionable when they could do so quietly; they even admitted him to some quiet little companies within the walls. Had he been compelled to labor with the common herd and have only himself for company he might have acquired regular habits and been compelled to think, perhaps to reform his nature, but when finally he

was discharged his moral nature was as apathetic as ever and his desire for harmful physical gratification intensified by a better bodily condition than he had known while a tramp.

He left the prison in good clothes, furnished by the officials, who really were sorry to lose so good a fellow; he was also supplied with twenty dollars in money and a great deal of good advice, part of which was to the effect that he should go to some inland village and try to get employment. With the energy of a nature much freshened by enforced regularity of habit he started to act upon the counsel given him, and his address was so good that within a week he found himself teacher of a country school at a salary, which, although small, was large enough to pay his board and to clothe him. For a few weeks he tried to lead a new life, not so much for principle's sake as to avoid the discomforts of poverty and degradation. But he fell madly in love with a buxom pupil. The girl returned his regard, and when her father refused to allow her to marry a man of whose antecedents nothing was known, the couple eloped and were married elsewhere. Their bliss lasted exactly as long as Fred's money; then the wife became miserable and the husband irritable. New attempts to obtain employment were unsuccessful, and so one night, when Fred had not money enough left to buy even a glass of beer, but could still afford a postage stamp, he wrote his wife's

father announcing his utter helplessness and begging the old farmer to send for the girl and take care of her until her husband could again get in condition to do so. Then Fred begged a ride from a locomotive engineer he knew, and by daylight he was a hundred miles away and again a tramp.

His fall to extreme degradation, though just as inevitable as before, was not as rapid. Long practice at trickery had sharpened his wits, and increase of years had made him more calculating and less reckless. Nothing, however, could lessen his abhorrence of work and his desire for the lower grades of physical gratification. For a long time he obtained food and drink by playing the piano at a rum shop where music was offered as a free attraction. He was not above picking the pockets of drunken men who happened in alone, particularly as the barkeeper did not object to sharing the proceeds with him. When, however, he was caught in the act of robbing the money drawer of the establishment his silent partner went over to virtue's side and kicked the pianist into the street.

Then he became a decoy for a gambling room, and his pleasing address made him very successful. After killing the goose that laid the golden egg, by robbing one of his employers, he wore better clothes and worse reputation by becoming a guide to the society of women whom society had cast out. In every position he held he was found at first in-

valuable and afterwards untrustworthy, so finally, spurned by even the vilest beings with whom he associated, he became again a penniless, hopeless, ragged, loathsome tramp, roaming from place to place, never knowing in what town or state he was, except when—and frequently—he heard himself formally arraigned as a vagrant or as guilty of petty misdemeanors.

One day, after being discharged from a county jail at the end of thirty days imprisonment, he hurried from an inhospitable Indiana town as rapidly as possible. The prison fare had been none too abundant, he had not had a whiff of tobacco smoke or a mouthful of whisky in a month, and he had been compelled to wash himself and his clothing every week, so he felt more clear-headed, decent, hungry and thirsty than usual. The corn in the field had not yet hardened, so he ate the kernels from several ears, but it was not satisfying diet. Returning to the road and tramping wearily along he saw a pretty cottage before which, in a door-yard full of flowers, a handsome boy of five or six summers was playing. The house, the garden, the handsome, cheery child all seemed to indicate that the people within had sensibilities; surely he might safely beg a bit of food of them.

He opened the gate and entered the garden; the boy heard him, stopped playing and shouted:

"Get out, you dirty old tramp!"

"Little boy," said Fred, taking off his hat and exposing a head that had become bald, "I know I am old, and dirty, and a tramp, but I am very, very hungry. Won't you give me just one piece of bread?"

"No, I won't," said the sturdy little fellow, retreating a step or two toward the door, "but I'll tell you what I will do. If you don't go away from here right away I'll set the dog on you, as sure as my name is Fred Valtrey."

The tramp straightened suddenly, clutched his grisly beard and gasped:

"What is—what did you say your name was?"

"My name is Frederic Valtrey," replied the boy.

"Freddie, come into the house," shouted a woman's voice. The tramp looked up, but the comely mother who stood in the door with a babe in her arms was not Ethel; when last he had seen her she was Annie Laythrow.

The tramp dropped his head, but he need not have feared recognition, for dissipation, baldness, a heavy beard and premature decay had destroyed every trace of his old self. He slowly raised his head as a gentle voice said:

"I suppose you are poor and in trouble, but why need you frighten innocent children?"

"Madam," said Fred, his voice growing very husky and uncertain, "I didn't mean to frighten him. I love children; they are the only good things

we tramps ever see. Won't you just let your little boy shake hands with me once?—then I will go right away."

Annie looked at her child; the boy hurried up to her, and at the same time a man came from the house, put his arm around Annie, and said:

"What's going on here, wifie?"

"Nothing much, dear," said Annie, placing a hand on her husband's shoulder. "Freddie, won't you go to the poor old man?"

"I'll go at him with a rock," shouted the boy, and as the wife reproachfully said "Oh!" and the husband laughed, the little fellow picked a large pebble from the walk and threw it at the tramp. It struck the wretch full in the breast and fell at his feet; the tramp stooped and picked it up, the mother hastily called her child and the farmer shouted, "Here, Carlo, Carlo!" and thrust his family indoors, but the tramp, instead of hurling the stone back again, pressed it to his lips, hid it in the rags over his breast, and with drooping head staggered slowly away, regardless of the dog that danced and howled about him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUT OF MISCHIEF.

For half an hour Fred Valtrey had a very clear head as he wondered what he should do about his discovery of his firstborn. His first impulse was to remain in the neighborhood, reform and see as much of his child as possible. By hard work he might yet regain his lost manhood; if he were to shave his face, dress decently and resume his original manners he certainly could become as popular as he had been everywhere else during good behavior. To make pure, unselfish love to a child—his own child—should certainly make a man of him once more.

And yet—suppose Annie were to recognize him, as some day she would be almost sure to do? He could not help seeing her if he lived near her, and as he recalled her mature beauty, her appearance of perfect content and honor, as he had noted it a few moments before, he was afraid he might betray himself. He had wronged her sadly in the past; he loved her then and he was sure he still loved her; but his love for woman always brought trouble with it.

His wits wearied with the stress upon them; he sullenly determined that he was too far gone to re-

cover, so in utter desperation he walked away as fast as possible from the scene of his recent experience. At a railroad station stood a train of freight cars, on some of which were sections of iron pipe, two or three feet in diameter, for the water works of an Ohio city; into one of these he crawled, and like tramps everywhere when at leisure, he soon fell asleep.

When he awoke the train was at rest, the night was gone and the sun was high, so he crawled out and begged some breakfast. The day was warm and bright, and the village in which he found himself was very pretty, so, as he had not yet been able to break his month's abstinence from rum, he really enjoyed what he saw as he strolled about. As he passed a church, the windows of which were open, he listened to the murder, cruel in every particular, of "Mendelssohn's Wedding March" by an organist. Deadened though most of his perceptions were, his ear was still sensitive, and the organist's sins against time and harmony were so dreadful that Fred found his way into the church and the organ-loft to remonstrate.

The organist, a very young, weak-looking fellow, was frightened at the apparition, but Fred exclaimed:

"Don't be afraid; my clothes lie if they say I'm not a gentleman. Do you know you're tearing Mendelssohn all to pieces?"

"Oh, don't I!" groaned the organist. "I'd give a five-dollar bill if this day were over."

"What's the matter?" asked Fred.

"Matter enough," said the organist. "There's to be a fashionable wedding here in an hour; the folks are New Yorkers. The groom has sent me a twenty-dollar bill in advance and asked me to do my best; he don't know, I suppose, that I can't play anything but hymn-tunes and two or three old-fashioned anthems. I've been practising all day at the wedding march—I've got an exercise or two that won't go badly before the ceremony, but the march—Oh, dear!" And the wretched youth mopped his perspiring forehead.

"Didn't you ever hear Mendelssohn's March? Haven't you any idea of its spirit?" asked Fred.

"Certainly," replied the organist. "It's in my head all right, but I can't get it in my fingers."

Fred pushed the organist off the bench, sat down at the key-board, and played over and over again the music he had heard so often. As he played, one wedding after another at which he had heard the music came to his mind, and he altered the stops and the expression of the music to suit his changing moods. When finally he ceased playing the organist clapped his hands and shouted:

"Hurrah! See here; I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll divide the bridegroom's twenty-dollar bill with you if you'll play all the music at the wedding.

Nobody'll know who does it, and 'twon't take you long. You'll want to play something when they come in, then some little thing after the ceremony, while the congratulations are going on, and then give them the Mendelssohn while they're going out."

"It's a bargain," said Fred, "if you'll throw in a bottle of brandy. And I want the brandy before I begin."

"You shall have it," said the organist, hurrying out of the church. In a quarter of an hour he returned, but the time seemed hours to Fred, for all the circumstances of his own wedding day trooped into his mind and made him almost mad. When he heard the organist ascending the stairs he hurried to meet him. He snatched the bottle, uncorked it and raised it to his lips as the organist said:

"Now, my mind will be easy. Mr. Phil Royal can't help being satisfied with—"

"Phil Royal?" exclaimed Fred, lowering his hand. "Who is he?"

"Why, the bridegroom of course."

"Oh! Who is he to marry?"

"A pretty little widow—Mrs. Fred Valtrey."

"I thought, said Fred, after a long stare, "you said they were New York people?"

"So they are, but Mrs. Valtrey was born here, and she has lived here with her mother ever since her first husband died. What do you know about her?"

"Nothing, or I wouldn't ask questions. Who is this Royal?"

"He's a rich iron merchant from New York; he's Mrs. Valtrey's partner in business, and manages the whole concern. But say, they'll be here within ten minutes; if you expect that brandy to help you you'd better swallow it quick."

Fred turned abruptly and threw the untasted liquor through an open window. The organist looked in amazement and finally ventured to say:

"You act like a genius."

Fred sneered and seated himself at the organ, dropping his elbow upon the keys and his head in his hands. In a moment or two he looked around him; his back was toward the chancel, but a screen hid his rags; in the mirror over the instrument, however, he would be able to see whatever might occur.

"They're coming!" shouted the organist in a moment or two, from the front window. Fred began at once the "Nuptial Chorus," from Lohengrin, but his fingers faltered as in the mirror he saw Phil and Ethel approach the chancel, preceded by a little boy and girl, and he closed the chorus in notes almost inaudible.

"You worked the diminuendo on that splendidly," whispered the organist, but Fred did not hear, for he had left the bench and was peering between folds of the curtained screen.

"Who are the children?" asked Fred.

"Mrs. Valtrey's son and daughter," was the reply. "Little Fred is a splendid boy; little Ethel was born only a month or two after her father died."

Fred looked more intently, and uttered a long, low groan. He saw the whole service, but it was not until after the final word, not until Phil embraced and kissed his bride and the couple turned toward their friends in the pews, that Fred saw Ethel's face. It seemed sweeter than ever, and her figure, all in white except for the cluster of blood-red roses at her breast, was to his eyes unspeakably graceful. Phil's embrace had broken the stem of one of the roses, and the flower now dangled pretily as Ethel bowed to one acquaintance and another who advanced to congratulate her.

"Play—play, why don't you?" whispered the organist; "this is one of the places where there must be music."

Fred arose mechanically, seated himself at the bench, and began to play "Auld Lang Syne." As he went on his own feelings caused him to frequently change the stops and the key, until the organist exclaimed:

"For heaven's sake, stop or change the key; your music is giving me the horrors; it's as dismal as a thunderstorm at midnight. Say, stop, won't

you?" They're just ready to go out. Quick—they're starting—give them the March!"

Fred crept down quickly to the screen. He saw Ethel looking into Phil's face as happily as if she had never known a sorrow; as she turned her head away again she saw the broken rose, pulled it from its stem and dropped it on the floor.

"Do play the March!" whispered the organist in great excitement; "you're spoiling everything."

Fred sprang back to the organ and began to play his own composition, "The Ethel Wedding March."

"Moses in the bullrushes!" exclaimed the frantic organist; "that isn't Mendelssohn; what are you doing?"

"None of your business," said Fred, continuing. Soon the organist said:

"Perhaps you're all right; if it isn't Mendelssohn it's just as good."

Fred played on until the organist came back from the front window, to which he had gone to observe the general exit. The young man laid a $10 bill on the extreme right of the keyboard and said:

"Old man, you've done well."

Fred blew the bill away and played on; before the organist realized the change the music had altered to a dead march, until interrupted by—

"Say, you ought to have taken the brandy.

What's the matter with you? Everybody has been out of the church for ten minutes."

Fred stopped, hurried down the stairs and up the aisle. He picked up the broken rose, kissed it again and again and thrust it into his bosom; then he threw himself on the floor and pressed his lips to the carpet, just where Ethel had stood during the ceremony.

The organist followed him and shook him, exclaiming:

"Get up, old man, this will never do."

Fred remained motionless.

"Say," whispered the organist, "I'll give you the other ten if you'll get out of here quick. You oughtn't go back on me after my giving you such a good job."

Fred made no reply. The organist was frightened and knelt beside him. Just then the sexton came out of the vestry room, and asked what was the matter.

"I don't know," said the frightened organist. "Here's a tramp that rushed in just as the people went out. He acts as if he was dead."

The sexton knelt, turned the body over, put his ear to Fred's breast, arose, and said:

"He *is* dead."

* * * * *

There was great excitement in the little town when it was noised abroad that an unknown man

had been found dead in the church. An examination of the remains gave no clue to the body's identity, for in the pockets nothing was found but a crushed rose and a large pebble. An inquest was held and "died of heart disease" was the verdict. Friends of the newly married couple tried to suppress the news, but unsuccessfully. In the fullness of their own happiness Phil and Ethel were ready to be sorry for anyone who was in trouble, so at sunset of the next day there was a quiet funeral at Phil's expense; and the only mourners were Phil, Ethel, and Ethel's two children, and the four gently covered the coffin of the unknown tramp with flowers that Ethel and her children had reared and plucked.

MRS. MAYBURN'S TWINS;

WITH HER

TRIALS IN THE MORNING, NOON, AFTERNOON

AND EVENING

OF

JUST ONE DAY.

TO

M A M M A,

MY HEROINE,

WHO MAY BE FOUND IN NEARLY EVERY HOME IN THE WORLD,

THIS STORY IS DEDICATED

IN HEARTIEST SYMPATHY.

MRS. MAYBURN'S TWINS.

MORNING.

BR—R—R—R— whizz—z—z—z ting-a-ling a-ling a-ling a-ling a-ling——

Such was the remark, prolonged to the extent of five minutes, that the alarm-clock made to Mr. and Mrs. Mayburn, at seven o'clock one morning. It was not the first remark that Mrs. Mayburn had heard since she retired, eight hours before, for there were other voices of the night besides that of the little clock ticking, and other hands besides those that went around on the dial. Baby Mayburn, otherwise called "The Jefful," which was a corruption of the appellation "The Dreadful," that had been satirically bestowed upon her, had spoken two or three times, and though she did not talk good English, her mamma understood that each time she spoke she wanted some bread and milk. The Jefful's last request had been made just as dawn was breaking, and, as The Jefful was a good little girl, and

consequently loved light better than darkness, she determined to stay awake. There was nothing wrong about this; the hours at which people should stay awake are affairs for personal taste to determine. But The Jefful was not satisfied with mere wakefulness; she wanted to get up and be doing, and, as she was only ten months old, she could not get up and move about without assistance. Justice to The Jefful compels us to say that she did her best; she wiggled, she pushed the covering off as far as her short arms would let her, and kicked it the rest of the way. Then she addressed herself to her father's hat, which hung on a chair two or three feet from her crib. She might have known, before speaking, that there was no head in the hat, and so conversation was an utter impossibility; but babies cannot be expected to know everything, so she continued her remarks for some time, and then she scolded the hat soundly for its silence. The hat did not say anything in return; hats are as quiet when scolded as really well-bred people are, but their silence does not make the scolder any more amiable; so The Jefful finally ended with an angry yell which would have raised that hat way up if it were not, as we have said before, that there was no head inside for it to be raised from. There was a head on mamma's pillow, though, and the baby's yell found its way into that, and raised it very quickly; and when The Jefful saw it, she said,

"Mom—ma!" in such an aggrieved way that mamma felt called upon to express a little sympathy. This done, she drew the crib blankets over The Jefful again, and rocked the crib gently, which pleased The Jefful so that she lay perfectly quiet, while mamma's eyes slowly closed and went back to dreamland in search of the remainder of a dream they had left there five minutes before. Then mamma's hand dropped silently from the crib, and found its way back under the coverlid, and neither mamma nor baby knew anything about it until baby's suspicions were aroused by the crib swinging less and less to each side. Now The Jefful, like all other pure-minded persons, had an utter horror of deceit, and when she found that she was not being rocked any longer she felt that she had been cruelly deceived; so she expressed her suspicion, disappointment, sense of injured dignity and general disapproval in the single word,

"Ow!"

This word does not appear in either Webster's Dictionary or Worcester's, so we do not know what it means. Perhaps mamma knew, but may-be she did not hear it correctly, for she ceased at once to look for her lost dream; she raised herself on her elbow, and told The Jefful that she was a bad little girl, and deserved a spanking. Baby did not know what a spanking was, but the tone in which mamma threatened it, showed her that it must be some-

thing perfectly awful, so her feelings suffered still worse, and she said "Ow!" again, repeating it a great many times, as if she wanted mamma to make no mistake about her meaning. Then mamma seemed to understand The Jefful, for she changed her tone, and said, in the tenderest tone in the world,

"Zare—no—s'e s'ant be 'panked, zat s'e s'ant. Did mamma 'buse her own ittie 'peck of a Jefful? —Mamma's an' old Jefful her seff, so s'e is, an' see was awfoo naughty to her own beebee dile. Now, Jefful doe s'eep aden, so as not to wake poo', tired papa? Zere, zere," and mamma covered The Jefful again, and leaned over her face and kissed her, and The Jefful saw, by mamma's looks, that her suspicions were undoubtedly unfounded and the deceit unintentional, so confidence was restored, and mamma swung the crib again, and The Jefful put her thumb into her mouth as she always did when at peace with the world, while mamma, seeing by the little clock that it still lacked nearly three-quarters of an hour of seven, attempted to drop asleep again; —she was not particular about finding the broken dream.

The Jefful dropped asleep herself, though nothing had been farther from her intention when she allowed a wink to loiter half finished on her eyes. How long she might have slept no one knows, for at sleeping she was a most industrious little girl.

But this morning a hungry fly had gone out in search of a breakfast, and had alighted right on The Jefful's lips, thus showing himself to be a fly of excellent taste, for The Jefful's lips were the sweetest things in all the world, and their sweetness was of that peculiar kind that makes the enjoyer want more and more, the more he tastes it. The Jefful would not have objected to this excusable robbery, for her supply of sweetness was inexhaustible, but when the fly turned around, with more carelessness than becomes a thief, his wing brushed across The Jefful's lip and tickled her so that she awoke, to find the crib quiet, and mamma quiet, and even herself quiet; so she said a great many things in quite a petulant tone for one so young. Mamma pretended not to hear it, but when papa sleepily grunted "Goodness!" and within two or three feet of her ear too, she roused herself so suddenly that papa muttered something about the uselessness of knocking down the house. This time The Jefful determined to be alert. She defined her position in her own way; then she turned over, and watched mamma closely. Mamma kept the crib swinging for some moments; but the instant she withdrew her hand, The Jefful rebuked her soundly. Then mamma, though working away, closed her eyes, and The Jefful protested against that liberty, so mamma opened them again, and was greeted with a jubilant crow, so very loud that she

wondered whether compliance might not be worse than slumber, so far as papa's peace was concerned. Then The Jefful sang a little matin song —a song without words, although the music was not Mendelssohn's—and mamma discouraged her with a low "Sh—h—h," and then The Jefful began to cry, at which mamma patted her cheek and The Jefful put one of mamma's fingers in her mouth and bit it with her lovely little sharp teeth, while mamma ground her own, closing her lips over them very tightly. Then mamma took her hand away, and such a howl as that Jefful gave!—and such a growl as escaped papa! Poor aggrieved little Jefful thrust her tiny hands between the bars of the crib and reached appealingly for the departed hand, which was more than mamma could bear; so she took The Jefful out of the crib and into her own bed and arms, and just then the clock struck the half hour. In the next half hour The Jefful was a very busy little girl. First she had to look grateful at mamma for two or three minutes, in which mamma made up her mind that it wasn't of the slightest consequence how often or how early she was aroused in the morning; she might even be willing to let papa be robbed of his needed sleep, for why should he not be in a position to know what an angel The Jefful really was—and his own daughter too? When The Jefful had done the grateful as far as she thought proper, she began to

inquire and try experiments. She picked open mamma's eyelids when the latter closed them for a moment in an ecstasy of thankfulness, she tightened one of her little hands around just three hairs upon mamma's forehead, and found that they would stand, without breaking or pulling out, the heaviest strain that The Jefful could put on them. Mamma tried to end this experiment, but baby protested so earnestly that mamma endured to the best of her ability, and indulged in facial contortions that The Jefful enjoyed amazingly, never doubting that they were given for her special diversion. Indeed, she laughed so heartily that mamma was again fearful for papa's rest, so she cuddled The Jefful very close to her and kissed the top of her flossy little yellow head. But this treatment did not suit the young lady at all; kisses and pettings were all very well when she was tired or in need of consolation, but early in the morning, after a night of healthful sleep, they were out of place; so mamma, while in the act of giving The Jefful a very affectionate hug, was stopped suddenly by a smothered noise, which sounded somewhat thus:

"Ya—ya—wa—wa—wogh!"

The squeeze was discontinued, and so was mamma's dream of bliss; but still The Jefful was quite a charming little body, so mamma did a great deal of pantomime for her with face and hands, and even extemporized a game of peep-bo between

her fingers. But The Jefful was beginning to think that it was time for her to be up, instead of reclining in one position or another; so she put one of her pudgy hands behind mamma's head and took hold of one of mamma's ears with the other, and attempted to raise herself to a sitting position. She might have succeeded, for mamma was willing to be a stepping-stone, or a pulling block, or anything else that would benefit her children. But The Jefful's wee finger-nails were so many sharp little lancets, and as they closed, all together, on the back of mamma's ear, they caused so much pain that mamma herself could not keep from groaning as she attempted to remove the little hand. Then there was a conflict of opinions, and mamma won by main strength, and The Jefful declared, in her own spirited way, that it wasn't fair, and she began to weep, and refused to be comforted; so mamma sat up with her, and swayed to and fro, and then The Jefful spied the back of papa's head, and grasped at it, and almost got it before mamma could slightly change her position. Even then The Jefful wriggled and worked her little head around so that she could see the coveted prize; so mamma got softly out of bed, intending to get a plaything for her darling, but, approaching the bureau, The Jefful spied the cup from which she had last been fed, and she straightway reached for it and said a great deal in the haste that comes of true earnest-

ness. There was very little bread and milk in the cup, and mamma feared it might be sour; but finding it was not, she gave it to baby, reseating herself upon the bed to feed her. Moving about the room had chilled mamma, and a return to the warmth of her bed was delightful, but the baby felt so strengthened by her light lunch that she insisted upon jumping; so mamma jumped her up and down until her arms were so tired that she could hardly have tossed a doll of down. Then she stretched herself for just a moment of rest, when the little clock made the remark with which our narrative opens, and mamma wondered how near dead she would be by bed-time, as she felt almost dead already. But mamma had too much to do to wonder long; there were her three other children to wake, and one of them, three-year-old Burnie, to be dressed; while the twins, Fred and Bertha, who dressed themselves, never did so until after being stimulated by great quantities of talk, which was more exhaustive than the work of dressing them would be. Then the kitchen had to be visited, for the single Mayburn domestic did not watch the clock as closely as she should, and if breakfast was not ready promptly at eight o'clock, papa could not get to his office by nine. So mamma hurriedly dressed herself, while papa yawned and remarked:

"What a dreadful row that baby kept up this morning!"

"Yes," said mamma.

"Oh," said papa, "did you hear her, too?"

Mamma did not answer a word; she only looked at papa, who looked at her, and saw how tired her eyes seemed for so early in the morning, so he told her that he was a forgetful brute, and that he wished he could afford a nurse; then he kissed mamma's eyes, which seemed to help them a great deal, for they looked brighter a moment or two later as papa sauntered down to the dining-room to read the morning paper, while mamma gave The Jefful a crust to busy her lips and quiet her tongue, and hurried into the next chamber to see that Fred and Bertha were awake, and to dress her three-year-old—her "beeboy," as she called him, this name being the diminutive of baby boy. She found Bertha fast asleep, while her twin brother, Fred, with one stocking on, and his trowsers in his lap, was reading Wolf's "Wild Animals," and shivering most industriously.

"My dear boy," said mamma, at the same time shaking Bertha to rouse her, "put down that book this instant, and dress yourself. How can you sit there undressed, and reading, when it is so cold?"

"Why, you see, mamma," said Fred, "I had an awful dream about a bear, and I thought I'd look in the book and see what kind of one it was. I'll know all about it in a minute, and then I'll dress."

As for Bertha, she was wide awake in an instant,

after mamma had touched her, and then mamma went to her three-year-old's crib, and saw two big brown eyes, which were looking very solemn, but which grew merry enough when they saw who was looking into them.

"How is mamma's beeboy this morning?" asked mamma, as she put her hands on his cheeks, and kissed him.

"Bobboker aw wighty," said the beeboy in return. He had never read his own name from the family record in the big Bible, and he had scarcely ever heard it addressed to him, so he could not be blamed for naming himself, and although Bobboker is not as melodious a name as some, and is longer than others, and no one knew what it meant, and its owner himself declined to tell where he got it, he never called himself anything else, and generally spoke of himself in the third person.

"What shall mamma do for her beeboy?" asked mamma.

"Kay me—kay Bobboker," was the answer, and so mamma took, or "kay"-ed Bobboker in her arms, and prepared to dress him, when she saw that Bertha, still in her night-dress, was reading.

"Bertha—begin dressing—at once!" said mamma.

"Fred is reading," said Bertha, with the air of one who was explaining away a misapprehension. For if either of the twins could not do whatever the other did, that twin felt greatly aggrieved.

"Never mind," said mamma. "Stop reading—both of you—this instant."

Fred laid his book down; Bertha closed hers, but held it tightly, while her eyes filled with tears.

"What are you crying about, my daughter?" asked mamma.

"Fred read longer than I did," sobbed Bertha.

"It was wrong for Fred to read at all before he was dressed, or before he had eaten his breakfast," said mamma, "so dry your eyes, and dress yourself; you know papa is always worried when every one does not come promptly to the breakfast-table."

Bertha dried her eyes slowly, but she evidently felt that she was a martyr; not that she was one willingly, however, for suddenly Fred complained:

"Mamma, Bertha is making perfectly awful faces at me."

"Bertha, what is the matter?" asked Mamma.

"Well, he *did* read longer than I did," said Bertha, and then her tears burst forth again.

"Don't be silly, my daughter," said mamma; "it is foolish, and wrong too, to want to do anything improper merely because your brother did it. Now brighten your eyes and dress yourself; all these minutes in which you are crying are flying away, and you will never get them again."

"You'll have lots more though, Bertha," said Fred.

"I 'spect you'll always be doing things to make me unhappy in them though," answered Bertha.

"You're a hateful, ungrateful thing," said Fred.

"Ya—ya—ya," said Bertha, showing her pretty teeth in a very ugly way.

"Children—children!" exclaimed mamma, stamping with her foot, "be quiet! Fred, take your clothes into my room, and dress there alone. If either of you are down late you shall have only bread and butter for breakfast."

Fred snatched his clothes together in any temper but the best, and went into his mother's room, while mamma heard a small voice saying:

"Bobboker 'awnts room alone to d'ess in, too."

"Mamma hasn't any more rooms to spare," said Mrs. Mayburn.

"Dimme one, den," said Bobboker.

"But I haven't any," replied mamma.

"Den dimme one."

"Mamma hasn't any, she told you."

"Well Bobboker 'awnts one."

"I haven't one."

"Dimme it, den."

"How can I give you what I haven't got?"

"Dimme it 'ight away."

"Don't be silly, beeboy."

"Well, I 'awnts anudder 'oom."

"You—can't—have—it," said mamma with such emphasis that Bobboker looked up into her face in

utter wonder. Then it occurred to him that mamma meant what she said, and an angrier little boy than Bobboker was for a minute or two after that was a something that mamma could scarcely imagine. He cried and screamed and yelled and howled and wailed, and when mamma tried to pacify him he snarled like any dreadful little dog might have done. Finally, when he was conquered by a promise of a lump of sugar at the breakfast-table, and mamma turned her head to see whether Bertha was dressing, she saw Fred prowling aimlessly and half-dressed about the room, while Bertha was invisible.

"What are you doing, my boy? Why are you in this room again? Where is your sister?" asked Mrs. Mayburn.

"I don't know where she is, and I'm looking for one of my shoes; I guess I dropped it when I picked up my clothes," said Fred.

"Find it quickly, Freddie, there's a darling; I'd like you to finish dressing the beeboy while I go see how Bridget is getting on with breakfast."

"Well, I'd like to know who took my shoe. I believe Bertha's hid it just because she's ugly. I can't dress without shoes. Bobboker, have you had buvver F'ed's s'oo?"

"Idono," said Bobboker.

"You ought to know."

"Sh—h—h!" said mamma. "Put slippers on —Sunday shoes—anything, but be quick. If break-

fast isn't ready in time, papa will be dreadfully bothered. What *are* you doing?"

"Looking for my shoe, I tell you," said Fred, very sharply, as he languidly turned over spools, thimbles, scissors, etc., in mamma's work-basket.

"Did you ever find a shoe in my work-basket, and do you suppose one could be hidden under those little things?"

"Well"—began Fred; but somehow he could find no excuse for his absent-mindedness, so he sneaked back toward the room in which he had been dressing. Suddenly he stumbled and howled; looking to see what had caught his foot, he saw the missing shoe lying just where he had dropped it five minutes before. Fred was so ashamed of himself then that he felt he must do something unusual, so, without intending anything of the sort, he dressed himself quite rapidly. Meanwhile Bobboker was nearly dressed, and mamma, leaving him in care of Fred, hurried toward the kitchen. The cook was doing reasonably well; true, she had forgotten to go to the butcher, only a block away, for the chops which he had promised to have ready for the Mayburns at precisely seven, but she had cut a slice of ham and put it on to broil. Then, finding there were no eggs, she had hurried out to the grocer's, and the ham had begun to burn in her absence; but mamma reached the kitchen in time to save it. Papa afterward said, at the breakfast-table, that if

there was anything he hated it was meat with the slightest burnt taste about it; but one thing mamma would never do, not if she had to cut her tongue out to keep from it, and that was to talk to her husband about the servants; so she merely said it was a shame, but one never could be sure of the exact heat to broil by.

After making sure that breakfast would be on the table in time, mamma hurried above to see that the children were ready to descend when the bell should ring. As she ascended, she saw Bertha emerging from the guest-chamber.

"What were you doing in that room, my daughter?"

"Dressing—in a room all alone by myself; you let Fred do it."

Mamma began to say something, but two or three people seemed to be saying so much in her own room that she hurried to learn what it all was about. Opening the door, she found Bobboker on the floor crying very loudly, The Jefful in Fred's arms crying in a way that showed she was not to be outdone by any three-year-old boy, while Fred was rocking wildly to and fro in a rocking-chair, and singing,

"We'll stand the storm—it won't be long."

"Oh, what *is* the matter?" cried mamma, hurrying to Bobboker's aid.

"Mom—mom—mom—mom—mom," explained The Jefful.

"Why, baby cried in there," said Fred, "and I put Bobboker on the lounge and went to get her, and——"

"An' bad o' lounge fwoed Bobboker 'ight off on f'oor, an' f'oor tummed up an' hitted him," said Bobboker, continuing his brother's explanation. "An' F'eddy tumfitted Jefful an' didn't tumfit Bobboker at-alle-talle." And Bobboker proceeded to finish his cry, but mamma took him in her arms and quieted him, and said:

"Freddie, dear, you don't hold baby nicely; you have her feet and head nearly touching each other; no wonder she cries."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Fred; "she ought to be thankful to be held in any way. I'm almost dead with holding her and singing to her this two or three hours."

"Does the time seem so long to you, poor little fellow?" said mamma, managing to get baby in one arm, while she held Bobboker in the other. "It seems so to me sometimes, when everybody is crying and needing attention at the same time. Now wash your face, and brush your hair before the bell rings —there!—it's ringing now!"

Fred dashed toward the basin, and mamma, laying baby on the lounge, hurried to brush Bobboker's hair. Somehow the brush was not equal to the re-

quirements made upon it, for Bobboker's hair was long and thick, so mamma tried a comb. Out came a great snarl from the matted hair and a ear-piercing shriek from Bobboker's lips.

"Put Bobboker's head on again!" screamed the little boy.

"Oh, did bad mamma hurt her dear little bee-boy?" said mamma, dropping the comb and kissing the child; "well, she sha'n't do it any more; there," and mamma tried with her hands to put the larger tangles on whatever part of the head they rightly belonged to, fixing them in place with the wet brush.

"Come, pet, aren't you ready?" shouted a manly voice from somewhere below.

"Right away, dear," replied mamma. "Run, Freddie, and tell Bridget to hurry upstairs to baby."

"I can't find my necktie," said Fred.

Mamma stood Bobboker on the floor, snatched a ribbon from a drawer, tied it about Fred's neck, and pushed him toward the door; then she picked up Bobboker and hurried down-stairs, where papa, who was in his seat at the foot of the table, remarked:

"We're ten minutes late again, little girl. I wish we could be more punctual."

Mamma looked at the lid of the coffee-pot, and the lid did not melt, which showed what excellent metal it was made of. As soon as mamma and the three children were seated, papa asked a blessing,

and all mamma knew about it was that she shut her eyes and remembered that she had not dressed her own hair, and that she had forgotten to tell Bridget not to move out the children's bed again without replacing the castor that had dropped from one of the legs, leaving the latter to stump, so to speak, across and through the matting. Papa completed his devotional exercise before mamma got through wondering whether there was or was not in the store-room a piece of matting that would replace the width ruined by the leg of the bed, but Bobboker recalled her to present scenes by pulling her sleeve and saying:

"Mamma, 'oor py'ate is 'ooked down to enough;" while papa laughed, and said:

"Any time to-day will do for my coffee, little girl."

Mamma poured two cups of coffee hastily, and took a sip from one, for it did seem as if she would break in two unless she swallowed something at once. Then she served and put sugar and milk on three saucers of oatmeal, poured three cups of milk, reminded Fred that he had not put on his napkin, helped her husband from the side dishes nearest her, and began to cut a mouthful from the fragment of ham her husband had passed her, when back came Fred's saucer for more oatmeal; Bertha's saucer followed, and then Bobboker remembered the promised lump of sugar. A second cup of coffee for

Mr. Mayburn consumed a minute or two; Bertha's meat had to be cut for her, because she was quite awkward with knife and fork, but finally mamma got that mouthful of meal to her lips, and was buttering a piece of bread, when Bobboker remarked:

"'Awnt mamma to wheed Bobboker."

"Mamma's beeboy feed himself, like a great big man," suggested mamma, as she bit industriously at the bread.

"Bobboker isn't big manny; Bobboker dot saw om." (Sore arm.)

This was too much for mamma, for Bobboker's right shoulder had once been dislocated, and he had been told of it so often, in sympathetic terms, that he was disposed to rate the accident at its full value. So mamma took the spoon, and fed the little fellow, and between two mouthfuls he said, "Dee mamma," which for the moment comforted mamma more than a full meal could have done. But she knew that as foundation for a busy morning a full heart could not take the place of an empty stomach, so she again attempted to get something from her plate, and succeeded to the extent of a mouthful or two of meat and a single piece of fried potato, when Bobboker protested; said he,

"Bobboker tummuk aw empaty some more."

Everybody laughed at this, but papa was thoughtful enough of the family welfare to say:

"Do see that he eats enough, won't you, dear?"

"Oh, yes!" said mamma, in such a way that papa looked up in surprise, upon which mamma looked down without being able to see distinctly for a moment. But her husband was finishing his breakfast; he would go in a moment, and not return for several hours; he was her husband—her dearest —and somehow she had hardly seen him or spoken to him that morning. She wanted to say something or hear him say something before he went, but her head was in such a tired whirl, that she could not think of anything to say—not, it seemed, as if she were to die for not doing it. At last she succeeded in asking:

"What is the news this morning?"

"Oh, nothing—yes, there is too: such a jolly row between the Mayor and the Police Commissioners. Just let me read you a bit of it." And papa read, in merry humor, a scene from the proceedings, and laughed so heartily, that mamma, like the good wife that she was, laughed too, though she wondered what there was funny or even interesting in the story.

"There!" said papa, suddenly pocketing the paper, and arising from the table, "this isn't business. I must be off—bye-bye." Papa kissed each of the children hastily, touching his lips to brow, nose, or hair according to whatever was the easiest spot to reach. He devoted a little more time to mamma, stooping over her, and putting an arm

about her neck; when he started to go, he found one of mamma's arms around his waist as tightly as if it intended to remain there, and mamma's head was leaning against him, as if it, too, wanted to stay.

"Bless you, pet," said papa, "you do love me, don't you?"

"Love you!" exclaimed mamma. Then she held him tighter, and he stroked her hair, and Bobboker remarked:

"Mamma mus' not 'p'ash wawtoo in her facey;" at which papa looked down for an explanation, and saw that mamma was crying. The tears were promptly kissed out of her eyes, but more came, and papa asked:

"My poor little girl, what is the matter?"

Mamma swallowed something that was not food, and answered,

"Oh, nothing—yes—a great deal. I wish we ever had any time together."

"Why, we have every evening together," said papa.

"Yes," said mamma. It was not the word, but the tone in which she said it, that made papa look at her inquiringly, tenderly, pityingly, irresolutely, and then to press her head tightly against him. Both were quiet for a moment; then papa looked at the clock, kissed his wife again, whispered, "Poor little girl," and hurried off to his business, though, as he

donned his overcoat and hat in the hall, he said something in a low tone, to the man in the hat-rack mirror, about the peculiar ways of women.

Papa had hardly left the dining-room when Fred got out of his chair, and, hurrying to mamma's side, hugged her and kissed her most tenderly, though he said not a word; then he pressed his soft cheek to mamma's cheek, at which mamma's eyes broke down again; but she pushed back her chair and dragged Fred up into her lap and gave back to him all his kisses and embraces, and said:

"Mamma's darling—mamma's friend—mamma's dear great heart."

"I don't know what you're crying about," said Fred, as soon as he was allowed breath enough to speak with; "but I'm awful sorry for you. Are you sick?"

"No, dear old fellow—only tired—oh, so tired!"

"What makes you so tired?" asked Fred.

"Oh, baby—and little children who won't dress themselves in the morning without being continually watched and scolded by mamma."

"Well, mamma," said Fred, sitting upright and looking honestly into her eyes, "I didn't see that shoe this morning until I stumbled right over it."

"You weren't looking for it, little boy; that is the reason you didn't find it. If you would only keep your mind upon whatever you have to do, mamma would be saved thousands of troubles."

"Well, I put my mind on things, but it comes right off again when I don't know anything about it," explained Fred.

While mamma had been caressing Fred and talking with him, she had felt one of her cheeks being kissed, and an arm about her neck which she knew was Bertha's; but she affected not to notice either while it seemed she could do something toward reforming Fred. The boy's reply, however, was more than she could answer at once, so she put an arm around Bertha, and Bertha tried to climb into her lap, and mamma worked Fred to one side and dragged Bertha up on the other side, and Bertha scrutinized the entire operation until she was satisfied that she was as completely in mamma's lap as Fred was; then both children sat there like a double-backed chair weighing a hundred pounds, and so ricketty that it took both of mamma's arms to hold it together. The proceeding did not escape the notice of another member of the family, who exclaimed:

"Bobboker 'awnts to det in mamma's 'ap too."

"Darlings," said mamma, as she rather abruptly spilled the children, one on each side, "mamma's afraid you'll have to get down; she can't hold three at a time."

"Bobboker," said Fred, with a pout, "you're a selfish, piggish little thing."

"He always wants to do what he sees any one else do," said Bertha.

"Sh—h—h!" said mamma. "Doesn't my little girl want to do whatever Fred does? And, Fred, you must never call little people bad names. Mamma might call you worse names, if she judged your character by your actions."

"But don't you see, mamma," explained Bertha, "I'm a twins, and Bobboker isn't."

"Well," said Fred, going around to Bobboker's chair and putting his arm around his little brother's neck, curls and all, "he's a ignorant 'ittle sweets, an' budder s'ant boose him."

"Ow—ye—ngya!" screamed Bobboker.

"There!" exclaimed Fred, retiring promptly; "just see how hateful he is when I try to love him!"

"Your arm pulled his hair," said mamma.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Fred; "something's *always* doing something to that young one."

"Tell him you didn't mean to hurt him—pet him a little," said mamma; but Fred had already whisked out of the room, so mamma explained in his stead, and pacified her beeboy. Then she looked at her plate again, and did not seem particularly pleased at what she saw, for the ham was glued down by cold gravy and the slices of fried potatoes had warped, like scraps of leather that had lain in the sun. But she finished her slice of bread, and tasted the coffee

to find it had grown cold and of that sickish sweetness which some sugar causes when it has been in solution for a few moments; so she poured a fresh cup, drank it in haste, took Bobboker, and went upstairs to relieve Bridget, first reminding Bertha that within half an hour she and Fred must start for school.

Reaching her own room, mamma found her bed neatly made. She disliked to disarrange neatly made beds; nevertheless she dropped down upon her couch, taking baby with her, while Bobboker climbed up on the other side, putting one elbow upon mamma's waist, and one hand in her neck, which tickled her terribly. As for The Jefful, she smacked her lips, and looked inquiringly at mamma, and put her thumb in her mouth, and took it out and smacked her lips again.

"Dear, dear!" sighed mamma, "I've forgotten to bring baby her breakfast. Will mamma's beeboy go down to Bridget and ask her for a cup of milk and some crackers for the baby?"

"I ca't," said Bobboker, who did not know how to say "can't."

"Oh, do—for poor tired mamma?"

"I ca't—Bobboker wants to lom you."

"You can love me all you like when you come back," said mamma.

"I ca't."

"Please?"

"Mus'n't say 'p'ease' to Bobboker—makes Bobboker k'y."

"Well, you shall cry all you like when you bring the baby's breakfast."

"I ca't—'awnts to k'y now."

"Well, cry—cry ever so much, and then get the baby's breakfast."

This permission rather mystified Bobboker, and he looked at mamma very sternly, but her face did not change, so the child scrambled off the bed and disappeared. Then The Jefful asked again, and more emphatically, for her breakfast, and mamma played with her so as to make her temporarily forget her physical needs. This plan succeeded for several moments, but The Jefful's monitor within suddenly prompted her, while right in the middle of a merry crow, to return to life's duties, and she did not hold her peace a second until mamma arose, took her on her shoulder, and descended to the dining-room, where she found Bobboker taking the scraps from the various plates and putting them where children imagine such things will do the most good, while Bridget was eating industriously and apparently ignoring the child's existence. Now Bobboker's digestion was anything but good, as Bridget bad been told some scores of times, and ham was a little the worst thing it could attempt; so mamma exclaimed:

"Oh, Bridget! How could you let him stuff

those dreadful scraps? And why didn't you send him back with the baby's breakfast?"

Bridget started as if from profound slumber, and shouted:

"Ah, ye bad little bye—fot are ye doin'? Baby's breakfast, is it, mem? How was I to know ye didn't take it' up yersel'?"

"I told him to ask you for it—the baby was screaming," said mamma.

"Never a bit was he afther askin' for, barin' a lump av sugar."

"I hope you didn't give it to him. He's already had one."

"Well, to tell ye the truth, mem," said Bridget, "he lukked that wistful that I gave him two."

"Dear, dear!" sighed mamma, and sat down to feed the baby. Mamma had just crumbled two or three crackers into the milk, and The Jefful had not made more than six ineffectual attempts to clutch the cup, and spring out of mamma's lap, and break her precious little neck, when mamma happened to notice the clock, and to see that the time for the children to start for school was a scant quarter of an hour distant; so she shouted:

"Bertha!"

There was no response; so she called:

"Freddie!"

Then she repeated each name two or three times, startling baby each time into wonderment and a

general drizzling of milk out of the corners of her pretty little mouth.

"I'll find 'em for you, mem," said Bridget, starting up from the table.

"Oh, thank you!" said mamma, continuing, as the domestic disappeared: "You're a real comfort, though sometimes you'd provoke the temper of a Job."

Within five minutes Bridget returned with Bertha, whom she had found hammering the piano.

"Are you ready for school, my child? And where is your brother?"

"I don't know."

"Find him at once. Both of you get ready, and come and show yourselves to me before you start."

Bertha disappeared, and five minutes later Fred bounced into the dining-room with:

"Mamma, have you had my spelling-book?"

"What should I want of your spelling-book, my boy?"

Fred looked rather sheepish, but said he wished he knew who had taken it.

"Where did you put it when you came home yesterday?" asked mamma.

"Nowhere."

"Where have you looked for it?"

"Everywhere."

"Where are your other books?"

"I don't know."

"Did you bring them home from school?"

"Certainly—I—anyhow—no, I didn't either."

"Now, hurry on your cap and overcoat, and come back to me."

Shame imparted haste to Fred; he was back within five minutes, bringing Bertha with him.

"Now kiss us good-bye," said Fred, hitting mamma's face all at once with his forehead, nose, and chin.

"Stop a moment," said mamma. "There's a button about to drop from your overcoat. Run up-stairs, and get me my work-basket, quick. Oh, Bertha, the toes of your shoes are almost white; go get me the bottle of polish."

While mamma had been talking, The Jefful had been springing and bouncing and climbing about at a great rate, but the absence of the other children gave the youngest an opportunity to appease her hunger, and even to give a caress or two to mamma, who was too nervous to notice them. Then Fred returned with the work-basket and Bertha with the polish, and both thrust their burdens into mamma's face, and the button was sewed on without much assistance from the baby hands that tugged at the maternal sleeve, and Bertha blacked the toes of her shoes and the tips of her fingers, so that she had to seek a basin of water; and Fred, without saying anything about it, hurried off to school alone, for

fear of being late and getting a mark against him, and he left the front door open; and Bertha, while searching for him, happened to look out the door, and saw him a square away; so she returned to mamma to complain and have a good cry, and mamma unsympathetically mopped her eyes, and started her after him, after which she cuddled the baby very close, and sat for some moments with her eyes shut, trying to collect her thoughts, but not succeeding particularly well.

Of one thing she was very certain: if she did not at once wash and dress her baby, she would be late with her marketing, which meant a late dinner, which papa, who preferred dinner at midday, could not endure, for he had none too much time at noon. So she took The Jefful upstairs into her neat, warm, light, sunny room, and placed a basin of warm water on the table, and with it the soap, and sponge, and powder, and towels, and napkins, and comb and brush, and laid clean clothing upon a chair, within easy reach, and The Jefful shrieked with delight as each article was placed, for to be washed and dressed seemed to delight her almost as much as to eat. What an excitement she broke into as mamma removed her night-clothing! She frantically gripped the insides of her sleeves, as the little night-gown was being taken off; she tried to unbutton her own shoes, and when mamma gave her one of the shoes to pacify her, she sucked ecstatically at the

toe of it. She pinched her little stockings with her wee toes, and then kicked them vigorously; she wiggled and twisted all sorts of ways as her little shirt was being removed, and when, finally, that small garment was drawn entirely off from the little head it had obscured for a moment, and mamma said, "Peep bo!" The Jefful burst into a merry, melodious peal of laughter that broke mamma's tired face into countless smiles, and made her a hundred times lovelier to behold than the handsome girl her husband had married ten years before.

And the bath—oh! First The Jefful's face and head were washed, which she did not particularly enjoy, for water got into her eyes, and mamma firmly refused to allow her to suck the sponge, though the baby fought hard for it. But when the little face was wiped dry, and as much of the remainder of The Jefful as the basin could accommodate was placed therein—oh, bliss, bliss, bliss! She kicked, and squealed, and paddled, and crowed, and wiggled, and exulted in all the languages she knew, and twisted, and grasped the rim of the basin, and tried to drink, and tumbled forward, and began to cry, but changed to a laugh, and grinned at mamma, and turned her head to see if any one else was enjoying the fun; and then she did it all over again, varying the order of exercises somewhat, but not omitting a single number of the pro-

gramme. Once, indeed, she went into such an ecstasy that she had to throw her head back to express it all; mamma's hand was behind her, but the little back was so slippery with water, and The Jefful twitched so convulsively, that backward she went, slipping about in the water until her feet and hands and head and a frightened howl all went up into the air at the same time. But mamma rescued her, and listened to her frightened explanations, and reassured her, so that back she went again, until mamma was afraid to leave her in the water any longer. Then she was laid upon a dry warm towel in mamma's lap, and another was placed over her, and she was gently pressed and rubbed until quite dry, and then she was powdered; after which mamma kissed her so thoroughly that she looked like a statue that had been pelted with roses which had forgotten to take their tints with them as they dropped away. Then she was dressed, though not without considerable remonstrance; and her flossy hair was brushed into a general fuzz of tiny curls, and she dropped a little sigh and subsided quietly into mamma's arms, and within five minutes she was fast asleep, with such a—oh! such a sweet mouth uttering gentle aspirations and delicate perfume, and mamma pronounced herself the happiest woman that had ever lived, and wondered what she had felt bad about that morning, when suddenly the hateful little clock struck half-past

nine, and the noon-day roast was still at the butcher's.

Mamma made haste to don cloak and hat and start to select the *pièce de résistance* of the noonday dinner; but, as she was about to leave the house, she remembered that she had not seen Bobboker for an hour. As she had not heard him scream—as she or any one in the house was certain to do when Bobboker raised his voice—she felt assured that he had not suffered any personal harm; but Bobboker's mischief-making was not all of that sentimental variety that injures only the maker, so mamma made a hasty search of the house. In answer to a call through the dumb-waiter shaft, she was informed by Bridget that the boy was not in the kitchen; so the parlor floor was quickly inspected, and then the main chambers and the attic, but without disclosing any misdeeds or even Bobboker. Then mamma became frightened; perhaps he had found his way through the front door while the children had it open. This suspicion set mamma simply wild, for Bobboker had beautiful yellow curls, that beggars and tramps always noticed, and perhaps some of them had stolen him away so as to shear his head. And what would they do with him after they had stolen his gold? Would they be remorseful enough to bring him back? Perhaps they had found him at some distance from home, for three-year-old boys can travel very fast when none

of their family is watching them. In such case, what? Would they give him to some dreadful creature in the Five Points, to be brought up as a beggar? Mamma was nearly frantic with her succession of thoughts; she actually ran from room to room, looking into closets and under beds and shouting:

"Bobboker! Mamma's beeboy!"

Suddenly, in one of the halls, she encountered Bridget with a compound grin agitating all her features.

"Wud ye come below, mem?" asked Bridget.

"Is it my boy—*is* it?" asked mamma.

"It is, mem," said Bridget, leading the way downstairs. Mamma was so happy at the sudden cessation of her fears as to be unable to say a word; as for Bridget, she emitted some terribly vocal explosives at irregular intervals until she reached the kitchen floor. Then, putting her finger to her lips and moving on tiptoe, she led mamma to the cellar, where, by the dim light of a single gas-burner, mamma saw her beeboy in the coal heap, apparently the happiest and dirtiest little scamp on the American continent. Then the laughs and exclamations which Bridget had been holding in for a moment or two burst out altogether in one terrific, volcanic guffaw that caused Bobboker to jump as nearly out of his little skin as was physiologically possible.

Mamma snatched him into her arms at once, and exclaimed:

"You darling, bad, sweet, filthy, little precious, don't you know that coal heaps are not fit places for mamma's nice little beeboy to play in?"

"Coal is all lovully," said Bobboker, putting his arms around his mamma's neck; "all byack an' shiny yike papa's Sunday hat."

Mamma took the child into the kitchen, looked him over, said "Oh, my!" and asked Bridget to keep him out of mischief until she came back from the market and could change his clothing and complexion.

As she left the house, she readjusted her cloak, for it seemed that lifting Bobboker had disarranged her attire in every way, and she furtively felt the button at her throat immediately after passing a lady who had seemed to scrutinize it. Mamma herself thought the button was a little bit to one side, so she twitched gently the other way; and then it seemed she must have been a little too vigorous, for the next lady she met seemed also to look closely at that same button. Then mamma grew nervous about her cloak; she looked down the line of buttons on the front, and the line seemed to deflect a little to the right—no, to the left—no,—well, she could not for the life of her tell which way, but of one thing she was certain: whichever it was, it was perfectly dreadful, and other ladies, who

were probably mothers and housekeepers like herself, ought to be ashamed of themselves to notice such things so closely and make her so uncomfortable. If it had been afternoon or Sunday, when she, like other ladies, took pains to appear as well as possible, she would not care how much they might look at her; she considered her taste about as correct as that of most ladies.

How long she might have gone on increasing her discomfort of mind nobody knows, had she not reached the market, where she delivered her order quite shortly, instead of waiting to make careful personal selection, as was her usual custom. Then she dropped into the confectioner's, as Bobboker always expected her to do when she went out for a few moments. But the old lady who dispensed candies also seemed attracted by that cloak button at the throat, and all of mamma's uncomfortable feelings came back in one big wave, with a gust of anger to drive it along. Then the old lady leaned across the counter, and whispered confidentially;

"There's a speck on your chin, ma'am; you'll find a mirror and basin in the ice-cream room."

Mamma disappeared abruptly between the curtains of the little saloon; the distance from the counter to the mirror was scarcely half a dozen steps, but mamma had time to imagine what each person had thought who had seen her. A speck? In the little mirror she saw a black mark on lower

cheek, chin, and throat; it seemed to mamma to be fully three feet long, and it really was fully three inches, and just the width of the smudgy little forefinger that Bobboker had unconsciously passed across his mamma's face as he put his arm around her neck when taken from the coal heap. Oh! Mamma took towel and soap and washed that dreadful streak until it was replaced by a very red one; then she left the shop so quickly that she barely remembered to say "Thank you," and forgot the candy entirely. She might have known that she would not be likely to meet either of those enraging women on the block and a half between the confectioner's and her house; but do what she would, her cheeks would blaze with shame and her eyes with anger as she walked along. Worse yet, she was met by a veteran beau, who was always elegant and polite, but whom she detested, and he complimented her elaborately upon her charming complexion. She got inside her own door before the cry came on, but without a single second to spare; and then she sat right down upon the bottom step of the stairway in the hall, and forgot husband and children and even The Jefful, and wished that she had never, never, never in the world been married. She admitted that now it was too late to change; but if a daughter of hers ever wanted to marry, she would lock her up until some millionaire came along; and even he shouldn't have her until mamma

herself had selected and trained a large force of servants. As for Bobboker, he was growing altogether too old to play in such dirty places, and he ought to be punished; he deserved to be slapped for going into that coal heap, and——

By this time mamma had mechanically arisen and gone to the kitchen to instruct Bridget about dinner; as she opened the door, Bobboker heard her, looked around with a smile too angelic to be affected by the dirt on his face, and said, in the most rapturous way:

"Oh, dayzh mamma!"

And mamma—heaven be devoutly praised for love's inconsistencies!—mamma caught the little scamp into her arms, and kissed him soundly without noting or caring whether her lips touched Bobboker or coal dust.

Of one thing, at any rate, she was certain: before The Jefful would wake, and the children and her husband return, she would have two full hours to give to that party dress, of which the facing had worn in holes that would persist in turning upward whenever she happened to see the end of the train in a parlor. So she left Bobboker with Bridget, and hurried upstairs and to work. She began ripping the binding from the bottom of the skirt, and was getting along nicely, considering the tediousness of the work, when, just after eleven o'clock,

Bridget brought up a card, from which mamma read, "Mrs. Marston Ballamore."

Mamma thought a great many things all at once. She did wish that ladies like Mrs. Marston Ballamore, who were rich and always faultlessly dressed, would call on the afternoons of her reception-days, when mamma was sure to be well dressed herself, and could be certain that her parlor was in perfect order. But now, with the parlor probably in the disorder in which she and her husband had left it the night before, after lounging in it all evening; with the piano littered with music, and a student-lamp at one side the music-rack, with a newspaper for a mat. And she had nothing better than a rather common merino to wear down, for her hand-some morning-robe—in which she thought she really looked as well as any one could in anything—had on one shoulder a stain of rhubarb syrup, which The Jefful's lips had wiped upon it a morning or two before. But repining did no good; so mamma put on the merino dress, and did what she could in a moment or two with her hair, and wiped the lint and dust of the ripping from her fingers with a damp towel, and descended to the parlor to apo-logize for neglecting Mrs. Marston Ballamore so long. But Mrs. Marston Ballamore had not been neglected, for Bobboker was devoting himself to her. He had followed Bridget upstairs when the bell rang, and as he could not travel as fast as

Bridget could, he had entered the parlor just as the domestic had reached his mamma. When mamma appeared, he was doing his very best to entertain the visitor, and the grace with which Mrs. Marston Ballamore was accepting and returning his courtesies, without allowing him to come within reach of her dress or her gloved hands, which latter seemed particularly to delight him, would have been very entertaining to mamma, had her æsthetic tastes been in that reposeful balance which is so necessary to the proper estimating of social amenities. As it was, mamma flushed deeply, banished the little fellow with great celerity, closed the door against him, and explained painfully to her visitor, while Bobboker remonstrated most vociferously through the crack of the door. Mamma thought Bridget might hear him and take him away, but Bridget was chopping the stuffing for the leg of lamb which mamma had ordered for dinner; so mamma excused herself for an instant, and called Bridget through the dining-room pipe, returned to have Mrs. Marston Ballamore tell her what a vivacious, intelligent little fellow Bobboker was, and to think that, of all detestable things in the world, the attempts of society women to smooth over the things they particularly disliked was the worst. She recovered her temper and her wits, however, under the influence of the older lady's good-heartedness and tact, and spent a really enjoyable quarter hour. As

for Mrs. Marston Ballamore, when she finally stepped into her carriage, she exchanged her company face for a very sober one, as she wished that her own married daughter had as healthful a face, as decided a character, and as fine children as Mrs. Mayburn's. But mamma knew nothing of this, and thought only that she hoped that, when she reached Mrs. Ballamore's age, she might have only full-grown children, so that she also might be able to appear as if she never had anything to disarrange either dress or temper.

Back to that dress facing went mamma; but, before she seated herself, she heard in the adjoining room a very sweet voice remarking:

"Obboo gobboo yabby yabbee ah hoo um boo baa. Iddy, iddy, iddy, iddy."

There was no Greek or other unknown tongue to mamma about this; it was perfectly intelligible, and it meant that The Jefful was beginning to get ready to begin to want to get up. Then there was a spirited race between mamma and The Jefful, the former endeavoring to get all the braid ripped off before the latter should reach that point where she might legitimately insist upon arising. Rip, rip, rip went the blade of mamma's little knife upon the stitches.

"Bibble, bubble—ob—ob—ob—ob—ob!" said The Jefful, and again the little knife said:

"Rip, rip, rip."

"Attee pattee okky pokkey poo," remarked The Jefful, and the knife said:

"Rip, rip, rip—rip—rip."

Then The Jefful took a rest of about two minutes, and the knife gained nearly a yard before its antagonist resumed with:

"Uppee—chip—ah—wa wa wa."

"Rip, rip—r—r—r—r—r—r—ip."

"Boo ga. Ommul lummy ummy moo."

This was rather discouraging to the knife, for when The Jefful got to the vowels that caused her lips to protrude it generally indicated serious business; so the knife went:

"R—r—r—r—r—r—r—r—r—rip—ip—ip."

Then the Jefful refreshed herself for a moment or two with her thumb, which gave the knife an advantage that it was not slow to improve. But there was something affrighting in The Jefful's next remark:

"Mom—mom—mom—mom—mom—*mah!*"

The knife had but two more yards to go before completing its work, and away it flew, literally snapping out, as mamma drew the braid to its full tension,

"Rip—ip—ip—ip—ip—ip—ip—ip—ip."

"Ya!" said The Jefful.

"Rip, rip, rip!" replied the knife.

"Ya!" repeated The Jefful; then she jumped a whole octave and continued: "Ya—a—a—a—a—a—a—a—a. Mom—mah!"

By this time every nerve in mamma's body had got into that little knife. Physiologists may say "pooh!" and explain that nerves cannot get into inanimate objects; but we know what we are talking about, and physiologists don't. Again The Jefful raised her voice and said:

"Ya—ya—ah—ee—ee—um—um—nga—ya—oobutty—ubbut—tub—tub—kupput non koo poo choo."

This stimulated mamma to the utmost; she had only a scant yard to go—then only two feet—then only one—then only eight or nine inches. Just then The Jefful started again, at which mamma gave a harder tug than usual at the braid; and crack the braid flew backward to the full length of mamma's arm, tearing a strip several inches wide of the facing and silk and taking them with it. And that train had been none too long, either.

Mamma dropped—threw—that dress upon the floor, resisting a vulgar impulse to stamp and dance upon it, and the face that she wore as she started to take The Jefful boded nothing less than impalement and subsequent quartering to that offender. But as mamma passed through the door and The Jefful saw her—and she saw The Jefful—everything that could have been reasonably expected changed to the deadest of Dead Sea apples, for The Jefful crowed as joyously as a whole perch of little roosters would have done at the coming of the dawn, and

mamma, the terrrible, the enraged, the avenger, the despoiled, mamma took her baby into her arms and didn't care one particle whether the dress would be too short, or whether she could match the silk so as to cover the rent with a flounce;—she simply didn't care for anything but her wee, pink-cheeked, bright-eyed laughing little Jefful.

NOON.

But the striking of the clock, whose hands had reached twelve, warned mamma of other joys to come; so, after devoting a moment or two to her personal appearance, she took The Jefful on her shoulder, and went below to see that dinner should be on the table at 12:15 sharp, her husband being due at that time, and the children five or six minutes earlier, though they were seldom punctual. On this particular day they were, for on the way home they saw in a shop window the latest nice thing in candies, and they hurried to their mamma to demand a penny each. She promised to give them the money, after dinner, if they were washed, brushed, and in the dining-room when the bell rang. Away they sped, and their haste occasioned some disagreement on the stairs. As the minutes flew, mamma flew also; she dropped the baby in a corner of the kitchen that was out of the line of march between range, pantries, table, and dumb waiter; she gave the finishing touches to the gravy, and made the

sauce for the pudding, and carried one or two dishes to the dumb-waiter; and even then the kitchen clock, which was daily regulated by papa's watch, marked 12 : 15 before the waiter was quite ready to ascend. Then a decided step was heard overhead, and it worked more and more in the direction of the dumb-waiter corner, and then the call-pipe emitted a whistle, that to the ear of mamma, which was then within a foot or two of it, was a little the most soul-piercing sound ever heard. But as soon as mamma could recover herself she shouted up the dumb-waiter shaft, "Yes, dear—right away!" and went upstairs, and greeted her husband as smilingly and affectionately as if nothing had happened all morning long, and she had done nothing but sit still and long for her liege lord's return.

Papa was already in his chair, and Fred and Bertha were in theirs, but Bobboker was invisible, which caused mamma to be somewhat absent-minded. But she did all that was required of the head of the table, and then, while papa, whose head was down, was remarking, "Oh, whom do you suppose I saw this morning?" mamma was at the dumb-waiter shaft, whispering down to Bridget that she wished she would run upstairs and find Bobboker, and get him presentable and to the table.

"Well," said papa, "as you don't seem to care

to know, I——" Just then papa raised his head, missed mamma, and asked:

"Where *is* your mother, children?"

"Here I am, dear," said mamma, returning to her seat. "I had to say a word to Bridget."

"I should think," said papa, after a sombre moment, "that a domestic should know her business well enough to leave you in peace at the dinner-table."

"It is no fault of hers, dear; I merely wanted her to find Bobboker."

Papa noted the empty high chair, and replied:

"She ought to know enough to send him to the table without being specially instructed."

"It's hardly her business, Will; she has had her hands full in getting dinner ready."

"Well, how much extra work would it be to get that little scamp ready for his dinner?"

"Not much, but——"

Papa paused for a reply, and finally asked:

"But what?"

"Oh, a great many things; you don't know how closely her time is occupied in the morning."

"Well, I've only this to say: if she were one of my men, and it was her business to have that

youngster at the table she would do it or walk." And papa felt so savage that he helped himself to another slice of lamb, although his plate was far from empty.

"Woman's work is different, dear," suggested mamma.

"Perhaps it is," said papa, after a moment or two of reflection. "I know one thing, though; I wish I could be a woman for just one day, and show other women how to run a house on business principles."

"I wish you could, dear." There was not a particle of anger, or sarcasm, or pique in mamma's tone as she said this, but somehow papa did not seem to regard the remark as sympathetic. Mamma saw that her husband was retiring within himself, which always was too much to endure when she saw so little of him, so she made haste to ask:

"Whom did you see to-day?"

"Oh," said papa, smoothing his brow, "it was my old classmate, Freindhoff. I hadn't seen the boy before in half a year."

Mamma was not particularly overjoyed to know who her husband's visitor had been. She had seen Freindhoff many times, and knew him for quite a noted analytic chemist, but as odd and absent-minded as a German student could be. Had he

not sat and smoked with her husband evenings innumerable, while the two men talked of college days and everything else in which she had not the slightest interest, both men apparently being utterly oblivious of her presence? Papa said that Freindhoff was as true as steel and one of the best fellows in the world; but she knew this much about him: he was neither ornamental nor courteous; he had literally robbed her of her husband many a time, and she hated the very sight of him. But she was determined to at least feign interest in her husband's friends, so she asked:

"How is he?"

"Oh, queer as ever. By the way, I asked him to spend the evening with us to-night. Don't forget to have some Limburger and beer for a little midnight lunch, will you?"

"No," said mamma, though she shuddered uncontrollably as she spoke, for the mere mention of the German delicacies recalled memories of odors which always made her deadly sick, much as she had tried to conquer natural repugnance for love's dear sake. One thing she knew: the evening was doomed, so far as her own pleasure was concerned, and she half wished that a sick headache or something would come to her rescue, and enable her to leave the two men to each other and their vile refreshments, of which pipes of strong tobacco would

form an important part. She would not hurt a fly —not she; she was tender-hearted enough to nurse all the invalid kittens that her children found in the streets, although she detested cats; but as for Freindhoff, she did not effectually resist a most unladylike willingness to hear that he had been taken dangerously ill, or even that he lay at death's door.

But if the Fiendhoof—that was the way mamma spelled his name in the privacy of her own thoughts —if he was to ruin her evening, she would at least make the most of her husband while she had him. So she talked of everything interesting she was able to recall, and compelled her husband, in spite of haste and hunger, to listen to her; and, finally, cajoled him into the sort of conversation which he enjoyed as dearly as she did, when he found himself fairly into it, and everything was going as it should between people who profess to love each other above all else, when papa smacked his lips suspiciously, and remarked:

"That stupid Bridget has forgotten to put salt in the pudding! What a shame!"

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed mamma. "Isn't that provoking?"

"I should say it was," said papa. "It tastes as flat as a backwoods pan-cake."

"And I hurried my life nearly out to make the sauce for that pudding," remarked mamma.

Perhaps papa heard what she said; if he did, his palate dominated his heart; for, after a reluctant attempt or two to eat, he pushed his plate from him, and looked very glum. Fred remarked that he considered the pudding very good, and Bertha said "Um!" and passed her plate for more; but papa's original impressions remained unchanged, and it was in silence that he finally took his departure, though mamma followed him into the hall, and hung on his neck a moment, and got a kiss for her pains. Then she returned to the dining-room; but instead of taking her seat, and addressing herself to the meal which she had barely begun, she stood at the window and gazed out at the back fence, as if somewhere in that structure there was concealed the magic wand that could change domestic drudgery into conjugal felicity. The appearance of Bobboker, however, recalled her from the ideal to the real, particularly as the young man demanded pudding as the first course of his dinner.

"Children," said mamma, after abating Bobboker's pretensions, until he was willing to begin with the soup, "you've only twelve minutes."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Fred, "and I wanted some more pudding. Bertha had two plates."

"You also might have had two, had you not dawdled so long over your meat, cutting it into peculiar shapes."

"Well, I've time enough for another piece."

"Not a moment; you've barely time to reach school."

"Well, can't I have it when I come home?"

"No—yes, if you start this instant."

Away went Fred; and Bertha, after trembling irresolutely for a moment, as to whether to go with Fred, or be left behind, the latter being inevitable if she finished her pudding, attempted to accomplish both desires by cramming the remaining pudding into her mouth. A fit of choking naturally ensued, and mamma patted the child between her shoulders, and Fred remained to see that his sister was properly restored; and when Bertha at last breathed freely, there were but five minutes of the noonday intermission remaining, and the school was six squares away.

"Mamma," suggested Fred, "don't you think we'd better stay home this afternoon! If we——"

"No, my son," said mamma, decidedly, "I do not."

"We'll be marked late, if we go," said Fred, "and I don't think that's fair to me when I hadn't anything to do with choking Bertha."

"You needn't have remained," said mamma. "If you had not stopped to beg for more pudding, you might have been at school by this time."

"And Bertha might have died," said Fred, "and her only twin-brother away off at school. Oh, I think that would have been dreadful."

Mamma kissed Fred, but was none the less firm in her decision; so both children crawled out of the house, and strolled leisurely toward school, while mamma ate as if never before had she tasted a morsel of food. Fortunately Bobboker also was hungry—so hungry that he fed himself, and allowed mamma not only to dine, but to think peacefully for a few moments. Mamma needed time for thought almost as much as she needed food, for she had some dozens of things to be done, each one of which was as important as any other, and all needed attention at the earliest possible moment. The afternoon before her would be five hours long, which time, if unbroken by visitors, should suffice for the darning of the dozen or more pairs of small stockings that had been accumulating in her work-basket for a week or two. Deduct a quarter hour for the labor of getting Bobboker to bed for his afternoon nap, another quarter just before supper, in which to dress for the evening meal, a quarter for The Jefful's various demands, and still one more for any probable caller, and there would

yet remain four good hours. She felt strong enough to attack any household duty, for she had really eaten a full meal, for the first time in—well, ages.

AFTERNOON.

THE first quarter hour mamma had admitted she would lose was to be expended upon putting Bobboker to bed for his afternoon nap; and this was how it began:

"Beeboy, it's time for you to take your nap now," said mamma.

"Tisn't," said Bobboker, very promptly.

"Mustn't contradict," said mamma, kindly, but firmly.

"*Isn't* contodick," replied the juvenile; "is Bobboker."

"Which dolly will you take to bed with you?" asked mamma, imagining that the diplomatic method would be successful, because once or twice before it had sufficed.

"No dolly at-all-ey. Dollies is yadies, an' yadies don't go bedden daytimes."

"Oh, you're mistaken, beeboy; a great many ladies take naps by daylight, and a great many more wish they could!" And mamma, sighing as

she thought of the necessities of a member of the latter class, continued: "Mamma would take a nap this afternoon if she could."

"Den why *don't* you could?" asked Bobboker. "You can come on one side of my beddy, an' Bobboker will hing you aheep."

"Mamma has too much work to do, beeboy; she can't go to sleep until long, long after dark. Mamma wishes it were dark now—and that dreadful German gone," she added in a low tone.

"Make b'ieve it's dok," suggested Bobboker, "an' make b'ieve me's mamma; an' oo's Bobboker, an' me'll put oo a-beddy, an' hing oo aheep. Tum on—kay me."

"Oh, you must take me, if you're going to be mamma."

Bobboker looked mystified, but soon got his natural face back, and admitted the impossibility of carrying out his plan in all particulars by taking mamma's hand, and saying:

"Tum on; Bobboker will 'ead his 'ittie beebee to the beddy. Beebees must walkee."

So mamma put down a hand, and Bobboker put one up, and led his passive charge to the bedchamber; then he climbed upon mamma's bed, and tugged at her hand, saying:

"Tum on."

Mamma dropped upon the bed and drew the edge of the coverings up over her boy.

"Tummer *oo*," commanded Bobboker.

"I ca't," whined mamma, imitating her little boy's favorite expression.

Bobboker looked at her very sternly; he seemed to have a suspicion that the remark was not original, but as mamma complained that she was a poor, cold little baby, Bobboker disarranged the coverings at a great rate, crawling all over mamma as he did it, and planting elbows, hands, knees, heels and toes promiscuously about without regard to the purposes for which nature had designed the various portions of the maternal anatomy. Mamma endured a great deal with only inward remonstrance, but when the child, endeavoring to cover her feet, got one of his own feet in a position which raked both her eyes and nose, planted his knees firmly on her chest and one of his elbows on her stomach, she exclaimed:

"Oh, beeboy! you're hurting me most cruelly."

Bobboker stopped short, turned his head, and asked:

"Fot 'oo say?"

"You hurt me—dreadfully—oh!"

"Poo' mamma—poo' Bobboker, I mean," said the little fellow, turning on his hands and knees until his face was almost over mamma's, while he inflicted torments innumerable upon his victim. "Me kiss the p'ace an' make it well." So saying,

he put a sympathetic face down to mamma's and kissed her, his weight being thrown more and more upon his elbows and mamma's breast as he did so. He kissed mamma's lips two or three times, completely stopping her breath and utterance as he did so; and then he laid one of his soft cheeks against one of hers; but the instant the blockade of the maternal lips was raised, a loud shriek fell upon the child's ears and caused him to give a convulsive jump, which set elbows, knees, hands and feet at one grand concentrative torture that elicited scream after scream, during one of which the young man found himself first turning in the air, and then landing forcibly upon his back on the bed beside his mamma. Did ever affection meet such cruel discouragement? Bobboker thought not—indeed he was sure of it; so he raised his own voice in a way that made the chandelier quiver.

"What is the matter with mamma's darling bee-boy?" asked mamma, as soon as anything could be heard.

"He fee's bad—lomme bit," said Bobboker. "He isn't goin' to be mamma not no mawey an' be 'boosed awfoo'!"

"Bobboker must be more careful, darling," said mamma.

"Don't 'awnt to be tareho," screamed Bobboker. "'*Oon't* be tareho'—ya—ya—ngya!"

"You don't want to hurt poor, dear mamma, who does everything she can for her Bobboker, do you?" asked mamma.

"Ess—'*awnts* to hyte 'oo—'awnts to hyte evv'y-body—boo, hoo, hoo!"

"Then you had better hurt that naughty, naughty little boy, Bobboker," said mamma, "and I will leave you to do it," and mamma arose and departed.

What would not any tenor of Her Majesty's opera company—any soprano, even—give to be able to reach and sustain a high note as Bobboker did when mamma departed and left him alone? Mamma herself who had heard Campanini, Capoul, Nilsson, Albani, Gerster, and all the rest, stopped and listened admiringly, and then with apprehension, for where did all the breath come from, and when and how could it be replaced? The sound finally ceased as abruptly as if it were broken cleanly from what had preceded, and mamma, hearing nothing for a moment, imagined suffocation, and flew to her child's relief. Just as she opened the door the plaint was resumed; it had been transposed to a minor key, but was no less wonderful in regard to volume and sustained effort. When the exclamation ceased, it was followed by the single word "mamma!" executed upon a single note, and prolonged so successfully that again mamma admired. But she knew

that any excitement, such as her boy's utterance indicated, would be fatal to sleep unless allayed at once; so she hurried into the room, and was greeted with:

"Lomme bit—Bobboker got saw om."

Mamma felt guilty at once; what might not that dislocated shoulder have been suffering while she had been selfishly moaning over her own physical miseries? So she told him that mamma was perfectly dreadful—a most terrible, hideous monster—and that Bobboker was a sweet little abused angel; and Bobboker gradually brought himself to accept her apologies, and took her hand tightly in both of his own, and gasped less and less dreadfully, and finally said:

"Tell me tawwy."

Mamma told him about "Little Red Riding Hood."

"Now temme 'nudder."

Mamma related the experience of "Hop-o'-my-thumb."

"Temme 'nudder."

Mamma rendered in prose the immortal "Hey diddle diddle."

"I 'awnts anudder."

Then mamma gave "The Babes in the Wood."

"'Nudder one."

Mamma varied the monotony of recitation by singing "The Mulberry Bush." Bobboker listened respectfully, but, as the last note dropped from mamma's lips, he said:

"Musn't do dat aden; don't 'awnt hongs—'awnt tawwies."

"Poor mamma is so tired of telling stories, bee-boy," said the victim. "You tell mamma a story, and rest her."

"Wayo, I weeyo," said Bobboker, after a moment of deliberation. "Mus' be vayyey tilly, vo. Once was a man, his name Hoppyfum, an' he an' a diss went an' wunded away wif de moon; but a wolf saw him, an' to'd him not to kay dat moon way offey, 'tause his mamma touldn't find it no mawwy, an' would 'pank him if he yawst it. So de wolf went to see his gandymudder wif a 'ittle wed bonnet on, and the gandymudder an' de wolf went off in de woods an' went to s'eep jus' 'ike two 'ittie Jeffuls, and deir mudder came along an' gave 'em some b'ed an' mi'k when they woke up, an' a 'ittle dog tuvvered 'em all up wif yeaves, an' hung 'em to h'eep. Ven dey got up dey danced awound a muwwy goosh."

"Are you sure you have the story right, bee-boy?" asked mamma.

"Idono," said Bobboker, after looking wonder-ingly at his mamma.

"Did the dish really run away with the moon?"

"Idono."

"What did the dish run away with, then?"

"Idono."

"Then what does my beeboy know?"

"Idono."

Conversation came naturally to a deadlock after Bobboker's last speech; so mamma patted the beeboy's cheek, and informed him that he was a darling, and that now it was time for him to go to sleep. But Bobboker corrected her.

"I 'hink I ought to be cawwied awound a ittie bittie, an' be hinged to," said he.

"Why, mamma did sing to her beeboy. Don't he remember? Mamma sang 'The Mulberry Bush.'"

Bobboker reflected, and replied:

"'Murry Goosh' was only *one* 'hing—'awnts *yots* of 'hings."

"After my beeboy takes his nap and wakes up again, he shall have as many songs as he wants," said mamma.

"Don't 'awnt 'em den—'awnts 'em now. Bobboker maybe wouldn't 'ake up at all-ey, all-ey; den 'ouldn't get any hongs a bittie."

"Oh, my beeboy will wake up," said mamma; "he always does, you know."

"'*Oon't* 'ake up," said Bobboker. "*S'an't* 'ake up; don't 'awn't to 'ake up."

"Sh—h—h, beeboy," said mamma; "it is very naughty to say that."

"*Tisn't* naughty," screamed Bobboker; "an' I 'oon't 'ake up a bittie for oo naughty o' mamma. Ya—ya—ngya!"

"Bobboker, listen!" said mamma, rising on her elbow and shaking a forefinger impressively; "if you don't go to sleep you shan't have any songs or anything else when you wake up; but you shall have a sound spanking right away."

Bobboker looked at mamma in amazement, to see if she really meant what she said; when he satisfied himself that she did, he turned over, buried his face in his pillow, and then broke into a wail that was clearly the expression of an unloved and broken heart. As for mamma, she sprang to her feet, and exclaimed:

"Now you may cry as much as you want to; mamma will go away."

"No!" shrieked Bobboker, turning over and stretching forth his arms appealingly; "mus'n't go way from Bobboker."

The attitude, the face, and the tone were pathetic in the extreme, but mamma had seen all of them before; and she hardened her heart against them, and started to leave the room, when she heard:

"Bobboker fee's bad; Bobboker got saw om."

This was harrowing to the maternal heart; still, mamma had on many previous occasions heard of that same arm, and the plea was generally offered in extenuation of some exasperating unreasonableness. So mamma passed through the door, when her ear was greeted by a dreadful shriek:

"Tum back aden—ya—ya—ngya! If 'oo don't tum back aden, Bobboker 'll pank 'oo. Tum back to Bobboker! If 'oo don't tum back, Bobboker 'll go back to God!"

Mamma clapped both fingers to her ears, but turned and took down one hand to open the door. At the same instant Bridget opened the other door, and displayed a very red face and The Jefful, and asked:

"Av ye plase, mem, how am I to do me wurruk wid this little dhivil——"

"Bridget!" exclaimed Mrs. Mayburn.

"Oh—h—h, she's an angel just sint down, so she is," said Bridget, apologizing to the baby; "but she's sint at the wrong toime an' place whin she sthrikes the kitchen just afther dinner, so she is. Av I lave her on the floor she scrames; an' av I put her on the table she throws off the dishes."

"I thought you loved her," exclaimed mamma, with a dignified sense of injury expressed in every tone. "Give her to me."

"I hope ye don't fale hurt, mem," said Bridget, kindly, clinging to the baby, as mamma attempted

to take her darling; "but how am I to do me dishes an' the baby's ironin' an' things, whin I can't have me hands an' head to mesilf a minute?"

"Give her to me," insisted mamma; "she needs some one who can manage her."

Bridget relinquished The Jefful, and retired as meekly as if she had done something wicked, while mamma, noticing with sinking heart that a full hour of the afternoon had departed, went back to Bobboker, whose shrieks had been simply dreadful ever since his mamma had left him.

"There, there, there," said mamma, soothingly, as she appeared again before Bobboker; "see what mamma has brought her beeboy. She's brought the dear little sister Jefful for him to play with. Bobboker must be very careful, though, or mamma will take her away again."

The movement was bold, skillful, and had every feature of a well-planned surprise; but one essential to a successful surprise is to find the enemy napping, either physically or mentally. Now Bobboker was not napping in any way; his senses were all alert; and he regarded The Jefful as critically as if he had suffered by a thousand shams, and was not disposed to add to his collection of disappointments. But when The Jefful saw him, she put out her pudgy hands, exclaimed, "Bob—bob—bob—bob—bob!" and tried to spring from her mamma's arms; and there was such hearty genuineness about all of this,

that Bobboker's suspicions were dissipated, and he said:

"Tum on."

So mamma dragged Bobboker to the front of the bed, and placed The Jefful where her brother had been, and made sure that the bed was pushed tightly against the wall, so that her baby could not fall to the floor, and Bobboker kissed his sister, and The Jefful fastened both hands in Bobboker's hair, and said, "goo, goo, ahgoo!" in the most ecstatic manner; and Bobboker said, "ah," and "ee," and "oo," and several other things, and mamma literally flew to her work-basket, and began work upon the small buttonless shirts, and the little stockings, which, though numerous, were outnumbered by the holes they contained.

How mamma's darning-needle flew! It was not merely because the work had to be done, and she had time in which to do it—oh, no—perish the thought of such a grovelling incentive. But there, within hearing distance, was going on a merry conversation between brother and sister, and every tone of either participant was affectionate, and laughter alternated with ecstatic crowing, and love seemed to have achieved the bliss it invariably promises, but so seldom realizes, and both children were mamma's own—her very own—and she was so proud of them, and so happy in them, and, in spite of work and care and consuming thought, the gates of heaven

seemed just within hearing, though out of sight; and the darlings had a papa who was the best man in the world, and a brother and sister who were unequalled in any family of which mamma knew; and mamma herself did not see how she had ever been able to endure life when merely a girl, with nothing but dress and parties and compliments to fill her shallow mind; and she determined that she would not have time turn backward ten years for all the money in the world, and she wished that Will, her husband, might accidentally drop in just then and see that she was not always tired and absent-minded. Then another crow, more enthusiastic than usual, escaped The Jefful, and all sorts of noises were combined by Bobboker as an antiphone; and mamma herself burst into an exultant strain from the song about "Mrs. Lofty," when she heard a pronounced bump, hard yet hollow, then a long-drawn howl, and a low, but emphatic:

"Goodnish!"

Mamma dropped her work and hurried to the rescue. She found The Jefful with her head against the wall, her eyes tightly closed, her face contracted into the ugliest of lines, her mouth wide open, and a new yell just starting from her lips.

"Oh, goodness!" exclaimed mamma, as she dragged her baby to the front and took her tightly to her breast and kissed her.

"Jefful a bad dile," said Bobboker, sternly; "she

wouldn't mind Bobboker, so Bobboker punissed her."

"Then mamma will punish *you*," was the angry response.

"No—*o*—o—O!" was the response. "Bobboker got a saw om."

"Is that any reason why you should give poor little Jefful a sore head?" asked mamma, sharply.

Bobboker reflected a moment, burst out crying, and whined:

"Idono."

"Then why did you do it?"

"Idono."

"What did you do to her?"

"Idono."

"What did she do to you?"

"Idono."

Mamma stamped her foot angrily, and asked:

"Then why did you punish her?"

And Bobboker, first looking all over the room and at his finger-nails for a reply, answered:

"Idono."

Mamma departed abruptly, taking The Jefful with her; and when the infantile tears were wiped away, and a smile or two had set the little face to rights, mamma put her baby upon the floor with a spool, an empty vinaigrette, and a red stocking to amuse her, and returned to the still unfinished stocking. The Jefful attacked the stocking with her teeth,

lecturing it severely as she did so, but seeming to enjoy the operation, while Bobboker wailed in the next room in a long-drawn way that promised to consume the afternoon. But mamma did not care; he might cry, and realize how naughty a thing it was to hurt his poor little helpless baby sister; so mamma worked away, and let him cry, while she enjoyed to the full every expression and act of the baby. The Jefful finally wearied of her playthings, and began to settle herself jerkily, and curve her back more and more, as sitting babies generally do when tired; but mamma, like most other mammas, had never in her life imagined that a baby's back could ever become tired. So baby went on jerking and protesting; and then mamma's elbow was twitched, and, looking to see who did it, she saw Bobboker, with a very solemn face, and heard him remark:

"'Oo boosed Bobboker."

What mamma might have said we do not know, for just then in burst Fred and Bertha, school having been dismissed.

"Mamma, may I go to the park?" asked Fred.

"Oh, say, mamma, may I put on my nice clothes and go visit Ellie Millston?" asked Bertha.

"I want an appoo—a nice peelded one," remarked Bobboker. Bobboker seemed to have some doubt as to whether he had been heard, for he again

asked for the apple, and repeated his request several times.

"Ow—ya—boo—goo!" declared The Jefful.

Now mamma might have answered each of the children, but one cannot very well answer four questions at a time, nor even hear them without trouble. Mamma did the best she could; she tried to imagine what her children had said; then she had them repeat it, and this is what she heard:

"Mamma, say, an appoo boo into my nice Ellie Millston," which was more than even mamma, with her faculty for translating child-talk, could understand.

"One at a time, please, darlings," said mamma.

"Bobboker was only one of him at a time, him was," said Bobboker, tugging at mamma's arm, and thus drawing her yarn so tightly that it broke.

"So was I," said Bertha. "Say, mamma, may I?"

"Ah—boo—um—ga—boobooloo," suggested baby.

"I'm wasting time awfully, mamma," said Fred.

Mamma dropped her work into her lap, and put her hands to her head, and when she had fairly taken hold of that useful member she seemed very unwilling to let it go; indeed, it seemed to her for a moment or two that if she removed her hands, that instant her head too would drop into her lap, which would scarcely be the proper place for the eyes, ears, and tongue of a busy little woman.

Mamma had shut her eyes, as she tried to collect her senses, but Bobboker, who had been standing in front of her, roused her by exclaiming:

"Mamma, 'top a lookin' at me wif the outsides of you eyeses; they don't say noffin at Bobboker."

Mamma seemed to think for a moment that saying things to Bobboker was not the sole purpose of existence, but when, a moment later, she felt one of her eyelids being raised by a little, though energetic finger, she changed her opinion, and opened that and the other eye also.

"Mustn't take nappies sittin' up in tsairs," said Bobboker gravely.

"Shall I wear my princesse?" asked Bertha.

"I won't need overshoes in the park to-day, will I?" asked Fred; "it's a lovely day."

This brought mamma back to the world, for she knew that the streets and parkways were sloppy in the extreme.

"Certainly, you must wear your rubbers, my boy," said she, "if I let you go. I'm afraid, though, that you'll get into mischief of some sort."

"*I* won't, just going to see Ellie," said Bertha.

"You may go, Bertha, if you will dress yourself without troubling me at all—and you, too, Fred; but I must see each of you before you go out: I want you properly dressed." Then, as the children hurried to their room, mamma said to herself:

"Now I will have a peaceful hour or two at this dreadful pile of little garments."

"Is you goin' to mend my appoo den?" asked Bobboker.

"Mamma hasn't any apple for you, beeboy," she answered. "When I go out again I will buy you one—an apple with bright red cheeks, like yours. Won't that be nice?"

"Dat 'll be awfoo nice; but the nice 'll all go 'way if you don't get it quick."

"Wait until to-morrow, dear," pleaded mamma. "Poor mamma is *so* tired, and she has *so* many little shirts and stockings to mend. Just see this great big hole in Bobboker's stocking."

"Mus' mend gate big hole in Bobboker's tummuk, too, else Bobboker can't wear dat old tummuk no longer. An' mus' mend it right away. Poor Bobboker's tummuk!"

This was too much for mamma, perhaps because, as Bobboker spoke, he put both his chubby hands on the front of his waist, and looked as sad and appealing as if he had been without food for a week. So mamma called Fred, and gave him two pennies with which to buy an apple at once for his little brother.

"If I had four pennies more," suggested Fred, "we could all have apples. Don't you remember how healthy you told Aunt Madge that the doctor said they were?"

"Yes, dear, but I've no more pennies; I've nothing smaller than a half-dollar."

"Oh, that's jolly; think of what lots of change I'd bring back."

"I fear you'd lose some of it, little boy. You must wait until to-morrow for your apple."

"Oh, mamma! You wouldn't have me be unhealthy, would you?"

"You're in no serious danger," laughed mamma, looking at the plump, rosy cheeks and bright eyes of her boy. "Now run out."

"Nobody can ever tell about such things," said Fred, with owlish gravity. "Bertha," he continued, as his sister entered the room, "don't you think an apple would make you feel healthier?"

"I guess *two* apples would," said Bertha, looking upward as she reflected and approached, and stumbling over the baby, who was seated between two pillows on the floor. The Jefful had a very strong little back, for a baby, but it had not yet learned to be equal to surprises; so the little back went backward with baby's big head on top of it, and then something hit the floor very hard, and baby said something that sent mamma's fingers flying to her ears, although there was nothing improper about it. Then mamma stooped quickly over the baby, and so did Bertha, after she had said "Oh!" and so did Fred; and three heads rattled against each other over the baby's, and Bertha said "Oh!" again,

and Fred said "My!" and mamma said "Goodness!" and The Jefful went on saying just what she had begun to say; and then mamma picked baby up, and her head met Bobboker's as she arose, and Bobboker said "Ow!" and then all the children cried together, while mamma wished she could be a baby and cry too, with some one to hold her, and no unmended shirts and stockings nearer than Van Diemen's Land or Spitzbergen.

"We'll have to have apples now, mamma," said Fred, after he had cried enough, and had wiped his eyes with his gloved fingers until his face looked like a map with a great many boundary-lines and rivers laid out on it.

Mamma seemed to think so too, for she opened her portemonnaie, handed Fred a half-dollar, and told him to go quickly and take his sister with him. Then she cuddled baby tighter, and kissed the back of her fuzzy head; and baby put up a pudgy little hand in a sort of aimless way, yet managed to grasp three or four hairs that floated low on mamma's face, and then mamma said "Oh, baby!" and tried to unclasp the tiny fist, while Bobboker stopped crying, and laughed:

"Ha, ha, ha!—fot a funny face you's a-makin'! Ah, you's stopped a-makin' it!" For mamma had got her stray hairs back again.

"Bobboker mustn't laugh when mamma is being

hurt," said mamma, "because it makes her feel bad."

"Mus' feel good when's havin' funny hurts to make Bobboker go laugh. *Mus'* have' 'em, I say. Is you got 'em? If you isn't, Bobboker fee's bad, an' he mus' k'y wight away."

"Yes—yes—oh, yes—I have them; I'll have everything, little boy, if it will keep you from crying."

But Bobboker had already got his eyes screwed up, and his lower lips rolled down, and he did not know exactly how to roll up and unscrew again, so he began to whimper in a doleful, draggy way, that sounded as if he was taking his cry so leisurely that he would never finish it.

"Bobboker, dear," said mamma, hastily laying baby in the corner of the lounge, and picking up her small boy, "mamma has a bad headache, and Bobboker's cry makes it hurt worse and worse—oh, *so* bad."

"Den lomme bit," squealed Bobboker; "that'll make the hurt go 'way. An' tell me story about good 'ittie boy name Bobboker, how he was always hweet to his mamma. Be quick; I feel the k'y all comin' out again."

Mamma hugged her boy, and patted his cheek, and at the same instant began: "Once there was a little boy—" when open flew the door behind her,

striking the wall with a loud bang, and she heard Fred's voice saying:

"Mamma, can't we buy a new slate-pencil apiece while we're out?"

"Yes, dear," said mamma very sweetly. But Fred did not see the look that came over her face.

"And a stick of candy, too?" asked Bertha.

"No," said mamma, very shortly.

"Now, mamma," said Fred, "it's only two more pennies, you know."

"Candy is not good for little children, my boy," said mamma. "You know papa and I have told you so a hundred times."

"Well I——" said Fred.

"I——" said Bertha at the same time.

"That will do," said mamma, so sharply that baby started violently, took her finger out of her mouth, and stared at mamma's face; there she saw something that caused her to burst into a howl, which was so high and long that it seemed as if it never could have come from so small a thing as baby's throat. Mamma sprang from her chair, set Bobboker on the floor, pushed Fred and Bertha out of the room, and shut the door as if it was a very hard one to manage. Then she picked up The Jefful, dropped back into the rocking-chair, and cried a great deal harder than baby did, though she made no noise about it.

"It's wainin' on you' face, mamma," observed Bobboker, after a moment; "shall Bobboker get mamma umbayella?"

Then mamma stopped crying, and laughed, and managed to drag the little fellow up into her lap with baby, and shut her eyes, and rocked with both of them; but when she opened her eyes by accident, and saw the pile of shirts and stockings again she groaned, and stopped rocking.

"Bobboker," said she, "don't you want to build a great, high block house for baby?—one of the big funny houses that nobody but Bobboker can make?"

"Ess," said Bobboker, after a moment of deliberation. "Get me de blockses."

"You get them, dear," said mamma. "Run up to the play-room, and bring them down in your apron."

Bobboker started, and mamma tucked baby away in the corner of the lounge, and drew her chair and work-basket near, so as to be ready to save The Jefful in case she should tumble forward. She picked up her work, and had just taken her needle in hand, when a little voice said:

"You mus' opin de door for me."

"Oh, mamma's big boy can open the door—just hold the knob tight, and turn it."

"Me do," said Bobboker, "but de knob don't hold Bobboker hand a bittie pittie."

"Try again, like a great big man," said mamma kindly.

The knob rattled; some grunts, and puffs, and quick breathings were heard; then a pattering of little feet was heard, and mamma saw a serious little face and two big eyes in front of her, and heard:

"Me tried aden, but door-knob didn't try any much at all. An' door-knob'll k'y if mamma don't open it."

"Then it may cry," said mamma, and took such a vigorous stitch that she stuck the needle quite a way into her finger before she fully understood what she was doing. Then she took the needle out very slowly, and put her finger into her mouth quite quickly.

"Why, mamma," said Bobboker, "don't you know it isn't nice to put fingers in moufs? You'll never gwow up to be a man if you do dat. An' the door is stayin' shut all dis time."

Mamma snatched baby, hurried to the door, and opened it, and said:

"Go!"

"Fare is me to go to?" asked Bobboker, looking very much surprised.

"Go upstairs and get the blocks."

"Fot blockses?"

"The blocks to make a house for baby."

"Fare is dey?"

"Up in the play-room."

"Oh!" said Bobboker, and mamma said exactly the same thing as she returned to her chair.

"Peace for two—three—perhaps five minutes," murmured mamma, as she picked up her work again. "But how I am beginning to hate my work." Peace did endure for two minutes, but not quite three, for suddenly the door-bell rang violently, and mamma remembered that her servant had gone to the grocer's.

"Oh, oh! I hope it's no one to call;" said mamma, putting baby hurriedly upon the floor. Then she changed her dress almost in a moment, gave her hair a few quick touches before the mirror, hurried to the door, and let in—Fred and Bertha.

"We got a—why, mamma, what is the matter?" said Fred.

"Nothing, my boy," replied mamma.

Fred seemed for a moment to doubt his mamma's statement, but at last he started for the sitting-room, remarking as he went:

"I think that nothing must be one of the dreadfullest things in the world."

Mamma followed her children, and as they seated themselves, said:

"Now, children, you must get a plate over which to peel your apples, and——"

Fred looked at Bertha, and Bertha looked at

Fred, and then both looked very blank, and Fred said:

"I declare! If we didn't forget to get those apples after all!"

"What did you go out for?" asked mamma severely.

"Why, for apples," said Fred.

"And candy," interrupted Bertha.

"And slate-pencils," continued Fred; "and the slate-pencil place was nearest, so we got them first, and then we got the candy because the candy-store came next, and then—let me see, what *did* we do then, Bertha?—oh, yes, we saw an organ-grinder, and we thought maybe he was one of the ones that play before our house sometimes, so we followed him up this way to see if he was, and here we are."

"I think here you had better stay, too," said mamma, "until you learn to remember what you go out for, particularly when it is for something that you yourselves want. Don't you think that would be a good way of learning?"

Fred didn't seem to think anything of the sort; while Bertha, who had determined just what to wear on her visit to Ellie, and just what to talk about when she reached the home of that young lady, disapproved of any discipline whatever on that particular afternoon. But both children saw something in mamma's face that made them think it advisable to be quiet for a few moments, so Bertha opened

mouth and eyes as if she would take in the whole of that particular figure of the carpet at which she was staring, while Fred rolled his lips apart and moved his eyelids together until he seemed to be nothing but a great big pout. As for mamma, she darned away industriously, completing one stocking and then another, until it occurred to her that the room was very quiet. The connection between calms and storms had been so often demonstrated in the Mayburn family that mamma looked around suspiciously, and saw Fred and Bertha making diabolical faces at each other, while The Jefful gazed upon them with a frightened fascination that rendered her utterly dumb.

"Children!" exclaimed mamma severely.

Fred and Bertha looked idiotically innocent in an instant, while The Jefful, the spell being broken, emitted a loud wail.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourselves, children? What were you making those dreadful faces for?"

"Well, Fred did," said Bertha.

"Well, Bertha did," said Fred.

"Say, mamma," said Fred, "I don't think you enjoy us much to-day."

"Neither do I," said Bertha.

"I really believe," answered mamma, after a quiet moment or two, "that I agree with both of you."

"Well, I know how you can get rid of us," said Fred. "Just let us have a tea-party."

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Bertha. "*Um!*" For Bertha, although Fred's twin sister, had a tooth sweeter by far than could be found in her brother's mouth.

"You may have it," said mamma.

"Oh—h—h," exclaimed Fred as he kissed his mamma soundly; "aren't you good to-day?"

Mamma accepted the compliment with the modesty peculiar to true merit.

"How many kinds of cake can we have, mamma?" asked Bertha.

"Only one," said mamma. "You may have sandwiches, lemonade, cake, and fruit, and you can have nothing whatever if you bother me at all about it. I will give Bridget orders to get everything ready, and you will have nothing to do but sit down and enjoy your party."

"Mamma," said Bertha, "I want to know just one thing: may I invite Ella?"

"Yes," said mamma. "Invite whomever you please."

"Hoo—ee!" exclaimed Fred. "Where's my overcoat? I'm going out to invite Jimmy, and Frank, and Stringey, and Whopps, and——"

"Stop—stop!" exclaimed mamma, "of whom are you talking?"

"Why, some nice boys I play with in the park," exclaimed Fred.

"Who are they? Where do they live?" asked mamma.

"Frank lives in the avenue, Jim lives over the candy-shop around the corner, and Stringey and Whopps both live in the same house; and oh—its just the loveliest house in New York."

"The loveliest?"

"Yes; it's so nice and quiet; it's got another house in front of it that shuts out all the noise. And my, aren't his folks rich? there's more nice white clothes always lying around their rooms than I ever saw in *our* house."

Mamma grew envious at once, for superabundant linen was a luxury to which the Mayburn family had never attained, work as hard as she might. So she began to question curiously.

"Is it very nice linen? But of course you don't know."

"Oh yes, I do," said Fred, "and it's awfully nice. And it's always clean. And oh, you ought to see what fun I have when I go there."

Mamma felt uncomfortable. She did not like her children to go to any one's house—even that of their playmates—unless she knew that their appearance was creditable to the family; and Fred had been to the residence of these boys without permission when, probably, his attire was disarranged and his face and hands dirty.

"And such fun, mamma, as we have there you

can't begin to think of. Right under their window there's a rope that goes around a wheel, and the other end of it goes around a wheel at another house, and we pull it back and forth."

Mamma was mystified; what people could want of ropes in such a place she could not imagine; perhaps it was a private telephone between two neighbors, and Fred had been disarranging it. She would investigate.

"Doesn't their mamma object when you play with the rope?" she asked.

"No," said Fred; "only when it's got clothes on it."

Clothes? Was this rope a device for airing clothing and furs? What intelligent care!

"What kind of clothes are on the rope?" asked mamma.

"Oh, shirts, and stockings, and things—just millions of 'em," said Fred; "Stringey's mamma sometimes makes as much as twelve dollars a week washing clothes, and the days she washes just don't we have fun blowing soap-bubbles in the tubs after the water gets too dirty to wash any more things in? Whopps goes and hooks his papa's pipes, and——"

"SH!" exclaimed mamma, as the truth flashed into her mind that her son had been the guest of a washerwoman's family. Fred looked astonished, but

determined that he must have been mistaken; so he continued:

"Whopps can always get pipes when his papa is tight, and——"

"Be quiet, I say," exclaimed mamma. "Ca—a—a—a—!"

"Well, they're better bubbles than we ever make at home, any way," said Fred. "Whopps's mamma says it's because the suds have more body."

"Fred!" exclaimed mamma, springing from her chair and seizing her boy's arm, "if you say another word, I'll send you to bed without supper, tea-party, or anything."

Fred looked honestly into his mother's eyes for an explanation, but failed to get it; so he dropped sullenly upon the sofa, and looked daggers at his shoe-toes. As for mamma, she went through every by-path and puddle in the valley of humiliation. She understood it all now. She had seen the interiors of certain city squares as she had passed up and down town over the elevated roads; her husband had told her of the little, squalid tenement-houses built in the rear of larger ones; she had seen the lines full of clothes hung out to dry, and her boy had become familiar with such neighborhoods and their occupants! Mamma had given many a package of clothing to charitable societies to distribute in such places, but now she wished

that—well, she breathed a small prayer that she might be kept from hating the people who, according to the Bible and the Declaration of Independence, were just as good as herself. Then followed some moments of most painful silence; then mamma said:

"My boy, you cannot invite Stringey and Whopps to the tea-party; and you must not play with them any more."

"I don't care," said Fred; "I think that's real mean, anyway."

"You must allow mamma to be the judge of that."

"Then whom can I invite?"

"Any one about whom I know everything. Invite some nice children."

"Well," said Fred, after pondering for a moment, "may I go ask Adolphe?"

"Where does he live?" asked mamma. "In a nice, quiet house with ropes on wheels under the windows?"

"No," said Fred; "he lives just around the corner from the avenue—on the same block with Mrs. Milston, you know."

This seemed to mamma to insure at least outward respectability to Adolphe, and, as the conversation distracted attention from the little stockings, mamma consented, and instructed the children

to hurry and deliver their invitations personally while Bridget prepared the refreshments, otherwise supper-time would arrive before the dining-room could be cleared.

"Bobboker 'awnts to tevite somebody," fell upon mamma's ears while Fred and Bertha hurried away.

"You invite The Jefful, beeboy," said mamma, as she called Bridget, and gave directions for the feast. Then she succeeded in disposing of several little stockings before Fred and Bertha returned and the collation was served. The children begged her to come down and see how lovely everything looked, and she thought at first that she would do so, but the passion for working had grown by what it fed upon, so she remained in her chair, and instructed the older children to place Bobboker at the table, and be sure that all his wants were gratified. As for The Jefful, she seemed to know that her mother was busy, for she just curled up in a Turkish chair in the happiest way in the world, and made lovely noises, without manifesting the slightest inclination to tumble from the chair to the floor. As for mamma, she was none the less happy, because through open doors she heard childish voices in animated, but not quarrelsome conversation. She recognized them all; there were the emphatic tones of her glorious Fred, the numberless inflections with which Bertha always rendered what-

ever she had to say, even if it was only a request for a pin; she heard the ladylike monotone of Bertha's friend, Ellie; the irregular, but delicious jabber of Bobboker; and another voice, so rich, full, and melodious, that she was fully satisfied that Fred's friend, Adolphe, was a child of fine birth and training. She dropped into a delightful reverie about the friendships and prospects of her children, but not a moment did her needle rest as she dreamed. Suddenly she heard Fred exclaiming: "I'll ask mamma," and a moment later the boy himself appeared, and asked:

"Mamma, can't we have sliced oranges with powdered sugar?"

"Oh, Fred," said mamma, "I can't call Bridget away from her work again; do eat your oranges as they are."

"Well, I don't like to give them to company in that way, to muss their fingers all up, and their nice clothes too."

"Your company will have to be careful, my boy," said mamma. "I can't call Bridget from her work, nor drop my own either."

"Then let Bertha and me slice them; we can do it as well as any one."

"Very well; you may," said mamma. "Be careful not to cut your fingers."

"All right," said Fred, as he flew out of the

door, and encountered with a forcible bang his twin sister, who was just entering. The children carefully imitated each other in most things; but the discord that arose when they cried in unison showed that they still had something to learn. As they screamed, mamma hurried to their assistance, to find Fred with a bleeding nose, and Bertha with a cut lip, which also was bleeding.

"Bertha's a—boo—hoo—a hateful old thing, to run bang into me that way," said Fred, taking his hand from his wounded nose to wipe his eyes, and smearing his face as he did so until he was a little more hideous than a Piute chief with all his war-paint on.

"You're a hateful old thing yourself," cried Bertha, her own visage bathed in tears. "You———"

"Be quiet, children," commanded mamma. "It was an accident; no one is to blame, unless you, Bertha, did wrong to come upstairs. Why did you leave the table?"

"Well, mamma," said Bertha, "if we're going to have fruit, I think we ought to have fruit-napkins too."

"You must not be so particular, my child," said mamma. "You are not having a regular dinner; it is only a sort of lunch, you know."

"Well, we're making believe it's a big dinner,

any how; the first sandwich apiece we made believe was soup, and the next was fish, and——"

"Never mind, dear," said mamma; "do your best with what you have, and make believe the napkins are fruit-napkins."

"We can't, unless they're colored," said Bertha, "and——" The remainder of her sentence was extinguished by the wet towel which mamma passed over her mouth as she washed the tears from her daughter's face. Then Fred, who had been operating upon his own face at the basin, displayed a spot of blood on his collar, and was ordered to redress his neck, which change he made only after considerable grumbling, while mamma resumed her work. In about ten minutes Fred descended, and a second later a loud remonstrance in his voice was wafted upward, followed by this pointed conversation:

"You'd no business to do it."

"I had."

"You hadn't."

"I had, too."

"You hadn't, either."

"You're a mean, ugly, hateful thing."

All this came up the stairs before mamma could reach the hall, and call down in her most authoritative tones:

"Children, stop quarrelling this instant. What will your little friends think?"

"Well, mamma," said Fred, running out into the hall and looking up, "Bertha has been and sliced all the oranges—my half of them and all."

"What do you want me to do about it, my boy —put them together again?"

Fred dropped his head and muttered: "No."

"Then run back and make yourself agreeable to your company."

Fred returned to his seat and mamma to hers. There was but one more little stocking now, and, although mamma had left this until the last, because it was the very, very worst, she felt that victory was as good as achieved, and her heart exulted as it had not done since a fortnight before, when she finished one of Bertha's dresses on which work had dragged in a most discouraging manner. But the end was not yet, for again Fred's voice came up the stairs:

"Mamma, where's the powdered sugar?"

"In the bowl."

"Well, the bowl's empty."

"Then go down to Bridget and ask her to fill it."

"She isn't there; I did go down."

"You can use ordinary sugar then. You won't know the difference."

"Why, mamma," whispered Fred, though loud

enough to be heard by his visitors, had they been out of doors; "do you think that's a nice way to treat company?"

Mamma dropped the stocking, and went down; she found Fred in the hall hugging the sugar-bowl, and led him to the kitchen floor, filled the bowl, and hurried back to her work, to find that The Jefful had imagined herself deserted and was wailing pitifully. Mamma had the distressed baby on her breast in an instant, and said:

"Did ze hateful o' mamma wun away f'om her poo'ittie andzel Jefful? Was a awfoo' unkind mamma, an' ought to be tsopped up into a fousand pieces—so s'e ought."

Nobody knows how these well-selected words comforted The Jefful; the little thing stopped crying at once, and looked so happy that mamma kissed her again and again, and conversed with her so satisfactorily that no one knows when she would have stopped had not Bertha appeared.

"Bertha!" exclaimed mamma; "go down again this instant."

Bertha burst into tears.

"Oh, well," sighed mamma; "what is it?"

"Why, you see, mamma, there were six pieces of cake, and, after each of us took a piece, there was one left, and Fred wants to cut it in two and give half to Adolphe and half to Ellie; but I think

it ought to be cut into five pieces, or else you can give us four more pieces. Anyhow, all of us ought to have a share."

"Cut it in five—no, do as Fred suggested. You should be ashamed of yourself to quarrel about such a little thing. No, stop; bring it up here, and let Jefful have a share in the tea-party."

Then Bertha's tears burst forth in floods, and her emotions were so uncontrollable that she sobbed aloud, as she started slowly down. Mamma sprang from her chair, seized Bertha's shoulder, led her back, and closed the door.

"Now, my daughter," said she, "if you don't stop crying this instant you shall go to bed at once, and stay there until morning."

Bertha stifled her sobs, kneaded her cheeks and eyes industriously with her knuckles, and at last became sufficiently composed to say:

"It was *our* cake, and I think we ought to share it around."

"Bertha!" exclaimed mamma, stamping impatiently, "one would suppose that you had never seen or tasted cake before. How dare you be so greedy and silly?"

Bertha's tears started again, for she was a tender-hearted little girl, and very sensitive to blame or praise.

"Stop crying!" said mamma, "or go to bed.

Make up your mind this instant which of the two you prefer to do."

Bertha made a desperate effort; she staunched her tears, swallowed her sobs, wiped her face with a towel, and went below looking like a very bad case of erysipelas to which the sufferer is compulsorily resigned. Mamma's complexion was somewhat erysipeletic, too, as she picked up that dreadful last stocking once more, and it took several moments of vigorous tugs and plaintive pleadings by The Jefful to bring mamma back to the semblance of tranquillity. Finally, however, the stocking, which had steadily grown hateful during the last quarter hour, was finished, and mamma's exultation was resumed as she placed it with its mate, and assorted the others into pairs, and put them into the proper drawers, after first proudly contemplating the entire heap.

Then she thought it would be pleasant to take The Jefful, descend to the dining-room, and give the children a final treat in the shape of some figs and nuts. So down she went, and just in time, for the company had already arisen, and were in a glorious heap on the floor in some sort of play that only children understand and appreciate. Mamma, for one, could not see anything amusing about it, and she proceeded to disentangle the children, her energy being stimulated by the cries which proceeded from Adolphe, who was not only at the

bottom of the heap, but whose face was dark enough to suggest imminent danger of strangulation. At last the heap was resolved into its component parts, and Adolphe scrambled to his feet; but even then his face did not assume a particularly brilliant complexion, and as mamma noted his hair, which was a mass of jet black kinks of extreme tightness, she determined that he might not have been in danger of strangulation after all, for Adolphe's ancestors had evidently emigrated, probably under compulsion, from Africa's sunny climes, and had preserved in all its intensity the original family complexion.

Within a very few hours mamma was thoroughly ashamed of herself for the heart-sinking and subsequent indignation which followed this discovery. In these cooler moments she saw clearly that Adolphe's extraction had not prevented his being a boy of exquisite manners, a carriage more graceful than that of either of her own children, an innocent, honest, child face, and a voice that was music itself. But, within a moment of her first full view of Adolphe, she had the elbow of Fred's jacket tight between her thumb and fore-finger, and was moving into the front parlor with a tread so determined that Fred was terrified even out of asking what was the occasion of the demonstration. The sliding-doors were closed with a crash. Fred was quickly twitched into a chair in some way that he did not exactly

understand, and then he saw before him his mamma with eyes ablaze and uplifted finger, and heard her say:

"How could you do it?"

"Do what?" asked Fred, hurrying through his mind to recall the latest dreadful act of his own that had not yet been discovered, and that he had not collected courage to confess.

"Do what!" echoed mamma so loudly and sharply that Fred shivered uncontrollably. Then mamma paced to and fro with her hands behind her back and Fred confided to Bertha at bedtime that mamma looked just terrible while she was doing it. Then mamma repeated, "Do what!" before Fred had recovered from the first shock; and, as she continued her walk, she imagined just how Ellie, who came of a tell-tale family, would tell her mamma that the Mayburn children invited little darkies to their house, and Ellie's mamma would tell every one she knew, making special tours of calls for the purpose, and everything would be dreadful. Mamma knew one thing very distinctly: she could never again hold up her head among her own friends, and she was just going to tell her husband when he came home that she should go househunting at once in Brooklyn, or Jersey City, or some other suburban town where she was not known.

As for Fred, he began to gain courage, partly

from mamma's silence, and partly because he could not for the life of him recall any particularly wicked act of his own; so he began also to feel aggrieved, and he asked:

"What's it all about, mamma, anyhow?"

"What is it about?" was the reply, as mamma stopped short and fiercely faced him. "It's about that boy — that — that —" Mamma had herself enough in control to remember that she came of a family of abolitionists, so she concluded with "that Adolphe."

"I don't see anything the matter with him," said Fred. "What do *you* see?"

"His color," said mamma, shortly.

"Why, you always said you doted on dark complexions," said Fred, "which I don't think is very nice of you, seeing we children are all very light."

"There are different degrees of dark," said mamma, while Fred disappeared behind a great pout, and muttered that he wished there was any way for boys to find out how to please their mammas.

"You said he lived just around the corner from the avenue," resumed mamma, ceasing for a moment her restless walk.

"So he does," asserted Fred, "and over the handsomest stable I know of. And *don't* his papa drive a splendid pair of black horses, and sit on a very high seat to do it?—oh, my!"

Mamma's tramp recommenced, and with a step considerably quicker than before. A short period of silence was broken by Fred asking timidly:

"Don't you think his hair curls perfectly lovely?"

"No, I don't!" mamma answered with extraordinary decision. Then she stopped, drew a chair to Fred's side, and said:

"My dear little boy, I can't say that you have done anything wrong, but you have made a great blunder. You mustn't bring Adolphe here any more; I am very sorry you brought him this afternoon."

"Why?" asked Fred.

"You can't understand now," said mamma, "but you must trust me and obey me. I wonder if—but no." Mamma had thought to ask him to ask Ellie to consider the tea-party a great secret, about which nothing was to be said by any one; but remembering how leaky are the receptacles of children's secrets, she refrained, and determined to make an early call upon Ellie's mother and many other ladies, and take the sting out of the story by telling all, as a laughable illustration of childish ignorance. This inspiration so comforted her that she kissed Fred, and returned to the dining-room with him to bid the guests good-bye. Adolphe had really a very attractive face, so mamma relented as soon as she saw him; she even put oranges into his pockets for the two sisters she learned he had at

home. Then, seeing it was after five o'clock, she managed to dismiss the visitors without seeming to send them away, and the spectacle of Adolphe escorting Ellie home so delighted her that she wished she could follow them and see how acquaintances of Ellie's family would regard the two as they met them on the street.

As she stood smiling in the doorway, however, glancing after the couple, she heard a sound which reminded her that she had left The Jefful sitting upon the dining-room floor, so she hurried back to her baby to find that enterprising infant badly mixed up with a high chair which she had toppled over. To console The Jefful was not a hard task, and then mamma flew upstairs with the young lady, undressed her, fed her, and, in spite of a thousand maternal promptings, which made her hate Freindhoff more than ever, she put the baby to bed and dressed to receive her husband's guest. When in the midst of the mysteries and miseries of her toilet, she remembered with horror that the beer and Limburger cheese, which her husband had requested, had not yet been purchased; so Bridget was summoned—to her own disgust—from her preparations for supper, and was begged to hurry out and purchase the detested delicacies. Bridget, in turn, impressed Fred into the household service; and his memory failed him so badly that he brought back Brie instead of Limburger, because all that

he could remember of his instructions was that the cheese he was to buy was "the dhivil's own, an' smelt that bad that no chaze in the wurruld cud hold a candle to it." So Fred, forgetting the name, had asked for whatever cheese smelled worse than any other.

EVENING.

But while Bridget was trembling for the result, mamma was in blissful ignorance of the affair; she assumed the cross of love by putting on her prettiest dress, and when finally she heard the front door slam, and a manly voice below shouting, "Home again, pet!" she went promptly down-stairs with as angelic a martyr's mind as ever approached a faggot-piled stake. She entered the parlor with a smile that her best friend would have considered sufficient, yet she had assumed it for the man who was to rob her for a whole evening of her husband. But she did not behold in the large reception-chair, where her husband always placed them, the goggle-glasses, the shabby clothing, and awkward figure of Freindhoff; and, looking further for them, she found her husband under a drop lamp, in the back parlor, looking very forlorn.

"He couldn't come," said Mr. Mayburn, as his wife interrogated him with her eyes; "he was called by telegraph to a professional job in Philadelphia."

"You poor, disappointed fellow!" exclaimed

Mrs. Mayburn, dropping into her husband's lap, and putting her arms about his neck. She really sorrowed for her husband in his disappointment, mamma did; but if her lord and master had seen the face which hung over his shoulder, he would have doubted forever woman's capacity for sympathy. Mamma broke into such a happy bewilderment of smiles that it seemed impossible to hide the truth even by hiding the countenance. Her husband tried to press her head backward so as to kiss her, but she was compelled, for consistency's sake, to resist. Her heart beat so violently, that it seemed her husband must certainly hear it, and suspect its sincerity; so she made a violent effort to control it, but with no effect. The room seemed warmer, lighter, prettier than it had ever been before, and mamma could hardly refrain from springing to her feet and shouting for joy. But she would be true to her husband, whatever might be her feelings; so she somehow exchanged smiles for solemnity, and kissed her husband's sober face several times, and was so affectionate and sympathetic, that the object of her attentions looked at her intently, and said, with deep feeling:

"You *do* love me, pet, don't you?"

"Why, Will!" exclaimed mamma, almost crying as she said it. But she recovered herself, and called him a silly fellow, and then the supper-bell rang; and as the couple arose, mamma clasped her hus-

band's waist, hummed a polka, and whirled him around the room, first to his amazement, but speedily to his great delight.

"What is the matter with you to-night, little girl?" asked papa, when finally disengaged, and on the way to the supper-table.

"Nothing," said mamma, valiantly swallowing the truth. "Only I want you to forget your disappointment, and it always makes me happy to try to console you when you are in trouble."

"You are an angel, Florence," said papa. By this time he had unconsciously given his arm to his wife, and was escorting her in the most courteous manner to her chair at the head of the table, seating her at last with a bow which mamma had missed for several years. Only one of the children was in the dining-room, but mamma did not miss the others; and even papa failed to note that there were fewer plates to fill than usual. And this was not all; conversation turned upon topics other than the family bills, the broken furniture, and the children's ever-to-be-renewed clothing. Papa found himself telling something that he had heard that day from a jolly acquaintance, and, although it did not seem to mamma to be particularly funny, the sight of her husband almost uncontrollable with merriment was of itself enough to make her laugh long and heartily. Then papa remembered another good story he had heard, and mamma laughed with

him over that, too, for it really was very funny; and at last papa was so impressed by his wife's merry face, that he dropped his knife and exclaimed, with looks and tones that were full of tenderness:

"I do believe I've got my little wife back again —my wife of years ago."

Mamma's hilarity ceased at once; and what first came in the place of it was almost like anger. This she quickly banished; but she was not so successful with something that threatened to break her voice as she replied:

"You have never lost her, Will; she has always been here—if her husband of several years ago had looked for her."

Papa looked astonished, and then aggrieved. Had he not been looking for her all these years? Had he not always longed to see her smiling and light-hearted when he came home, and had he not almost always been disappointed? Was she not almost always abstracted, or quiet, or nearly invisible? Did she not seem almost to delight in doing things that took her away from him? How often, in late years, had he been able to impress anything upon her mind without mentioning it at least twice? Time and time again, while he was telling her something in which he was greatly interested, did she not show by her looks that she was not hearing him at all, and by her actions that she was more intent upon seeing that

one child kept its napkin under its chin at table, and another was not rubbing out the knees of its stockings on the floor, and that Bridget was setting bread to rise at just the proper hour and part of the kitchen, and heaven only knows what else? Mamma should never, never know how deeply she had hurt him; but he could not be entirely silent after such a rebuke, so he said:

"Do you think that is a very kind speech, my dear? I've never ceased to look for you."

"I believe you, my husband," said mamma, going around to the aggrieved man's side, "but if you wanted very much to find any one, shouldn't you think it would be well to go where they were?"

Papa looked at her in astonishment, and replied:

"Why, don't I always go where you are? Where can I find you, except at home?"

"Find me where my interests lie, dear. You are my first, my dearest; but I have four other dear ones who are practically helpless, as you are not. I have the home to look after, and its work can never be done. The children and home are yours as much as they are mine; why don't you come to them when you want me?"

A glimpse of something heretofore undiscovered rewarded papa's introspective gaze; but mamma broke down just then, and papa, whose love was as great as his ignorance, and as glad as any good man's is to give rather than receive, consoled his

wife as tenderly as he knew how, and when at last he had dried her tears and seen a smile forced into her face, he said:

"I'll see if I can't be wiser hereafter, little girl. There, now; let's have a pleasant evening to ourselves."

Mamma had sunk to the floor, and pillowed her head on her husband's knee, and he was smoothing the disarranged hairs on her brow; she did not seem to care ever to get up, and he did not seem to desire that she should, when in burst Fred with:

"Ain't I ever to have any supper, I'd like to know?"

"You should have come in when the bell rang, sir," said papa, sternly.

"I didn't hear the bell," answered Fred, promptly.

"Where were you?"

"Over in the park."

Papa did not know what to say next, so he said nothing. Then Bertha straggled in; she had been in the play-room on the top floor, and had heard no bell. So papa and mamma reluctantly disengaged themselves, and filled their children's plates and cups; then papa led mamma to the parlor, and did it in the most affectionate manner, and begged her to sing one of her songs which he had not heard or mentioned in years. Mamma sang it gloriously; she astonished even herself. Then she sang an-

other, and still another, all by special request, and all well, and papa began to think that there never was such a glorious evening, when suddenly he noted that mamma was becoming abstracted. He was about to kindly call her attention to it, when she exclaimed:

"Now, old fellow, I must put Bobboker and The Jefful to bed."

Papa unconsciously made an impatient gesture, but said tenderly:

"I wish you didn't have to go away from me."

"Would it be impossible for you to go with me?" asked mamma with a smile.

"The idea!" exclaimed papa. "Those young ones keep up an incessant hullabaloo from the moment you undress them until they drop asleep. What chance would there be for me to speak a word to you?"

Mamma thought that if papa were she and she were papa it would be delightful even to sit where he was at work, let the noise be what it might; but she merely said, as she left the room:

"Very well."

Papa arose from his chair, stepped irresolutely toward his wife, paused, turned, and began to pace the floor moodily.

"'Very well!'" he echoed. "Umph! That sounded very much as if she felt offended. But what about, I wonder? Let me see, what were we

talking about? Oh, about my going with her to the children's room. She couldn't have felt hurt because I didn't want to do that; she knows as well as I do that there's no such thing as speaking half a dozen words consecutively where those two children are. The baby finds something to cry about all the while she is being undressed, and Bobboker never ceases for an instant to gabble when his mother is paying attention to either of the other children. What could she have been thinking about? I vow, women are the best beings alive, but they're certainly the most unreasonable."

The longer papa paced and soliloquized the more uncomfortable he became, but he finally determined that the only manly course would be do endure in silence whatever unfair treatment he received from his wife; she was a noble, earnest, affectionate woman, who certainly had a great deal to try her patience from day to day, and if her experiences had sometimes the effect of warping her intelligence and temper, her husband should be loving enough to endure it tenderly and without complaint. That such a duty was to be his did not, however, improve his spirits any, and he roamed restlessly about the room, seeking relief, but finding none, in books and pictures. Then he dropped upon the piano stool, and tormented the instrument into various discords, until mamma flew down the stairs and to his side again. He looked at her with

an odd mixture of dolefulness and conscious heroism, and she showed a face full of contrition and humility, all of which papa accepted in affecting silence.

But mamma was not going to be miserable, no matter what had happened. An evening saved from Freindhoff was like a brand snatched from the burning, so at least it seemed to mamma; so, when she saw, without seeming to look, that her husband's lips were twitching, as if they had something which they were trying to lock in, and which would, therefore, keep anything else from getting out, she drew a chair to her husband's side and in front of the piano, and played and sang:

"O, whistle, and I'll come to thee, my lad,"

with a dash that was simply irresistible. Papa combated the influence of the song for a bar or two, but he had finally to turn his head away, for his lips were breaking down, and the wrinkles in his brow were smoothing in spite of himself. He tried to make himself believe that the influence, like the song, would last only for a moment or two; but it was useless. He found himself upon his feet without understanding exactly how he got there; then he was contemplating himself in the back of a tiny mirror on the music-stand, and determining that he was quite young and bright-looking for a man who had been determining to be a martyr. Then he walked—strutted almost—the length of the parlors,

looking at his wife quite steadily, as he did so, and as the last strain of the chorus at the end of the song died away, his pretty wife received a hearty kiss on each cheek, and martyrdom and injured feelings were as far away as the days of Adam.

"Italian opera would be an utter failure in New York if all wives sang at home as you can sing, my dear," said he.

Mamma felt sure that she knew better, but she would not for the world have undeceived him if he had such ideas; so she merely said:

"It's delightful to have one's efforts appreciated. What else shall I sing you?"

Papa dragged dusty volumes of music from the stand, while mamma extemporized a little waltz.

"Try the 'Jewel Song' from *Faust*," said papa finally, as he placed the music before her.

"My dear fellow," said mamma, deprecatingly, "I'm not Gerster, nor Kellogg, nor Nilsson."

"Mamma mus' hing 'Hus' my deeo," said a small, familiar voice. Both parents turned quickly, and saw Bobboker standing in the doorway, clad in a long white robe, a rumpled head, and an angelic expression of countenance.

"Did you ever?" exclaimed mamma. "The darling little scamp! Think of singing well enough to have drawn him from his bed, and all the way down here," and mamma sprang from her seat and toward Bobboker, while papa roared:

"You young tatterdemalion, if you don't scamper back to bed, I'll give you a sound drubbing. What do you mean by getting up after you have been put to rest?"

"Oh, Will!" exclaimed mamma, picking up her child.

"Don't 'awnt a 'dwubbin'," cried Bobboker, and he cried a great many other things after he had his head safely pillowed on his mother's shoulder.

"I'll get him into bed again within two minutes, dear," said mamma, hurrying up the stairs, and leaving a long train of minor wailing behind her.

Papa dashed about the room in a manner that would have made the furniture shudder with fear, were it not that furniture is mercifully spared the sensibilities peculiar to poor humanity. He was preparing a terrible statement of his views concerning children, when mamma spoiled his train of thought by dashing into the room; for the promptness with which she had disposed of the juvenile disturber was wonderful enough to elicit admiration from a far angrier man than papa. To be sure, she came in as smilingly as if nothing had happened, and this would have been enough to aggravate papa's mental disorder had the young man not been powerless when within the range of a loving smile from his wife. Then mamma seated herself at the piano, and faced the "Jewel Song," without a shudder. She knew she was being guilty of the maddest

temerity, but what would she not attempt for the husband who loved her, and whom she loved so dearly? She had read of men—soldiers—who, single-handed, had charged a troop or a battery, nerved only by love of dear ones or country, and the "Jewel Song" was no more affrighting than a troop or battery—not much more so, any way. So she struck the key-note, and attempted it with her voice; whether she got it correctly she did not exactly know, for at the same time she heard a voice shouting:

"Mamma!"

"What is it, Freddie?"

"Be quiet, sir!" exclaimed papa, flying to the foot of the stairs, and shaking his fist savagely at his heir.

"Let us see first what is the matter, dear," suggested mamma, approaching her husband. "Why are you not in bed, Freddie?"

"Isn't somebody going to hear us say our prayers?" inquired Fred.

"Dear, dear," sighed mamma; "I forgot that, in my hurry to get back to you, Will." Then mamma looked at papa, who almost glared at her in return; she wished her husband might volunteer to go and conduct the devotions of his children, and he wickedly wished that prayers had never been invented. Then papa slowly became aware of the selfishness of his feeling, so he sneaked away to

grumble to himself in the parlor, and mamma slowly and sadly went up to her boy, took the heavy little fellow in her arms, and kissed him all the way from the hallway to his bed, and left something on his face that was moister than kisses.

As for papa, he spent several moments in a savage attempt to justify his anger to himself. Praying was right enough, of course, he had nothing to say against prayer, but he wished that children were devout enough to think of their prayers while there was some one present to listen to them, instead of tormenting adults into doing something which was the exact reverse of prayer. And if women would only attend to their household affairs as systematically as their husbands attended to business, what a difference he knew there would be in the happiness of husbands!

When mamma returned to the parlor, she found it empty; but a hasty note had been scrawled by papa on the fly-leaf of a book, and placed on the music-rack of the piano. It said that papa was just going to run up for a few minutes to the Whiffle Club, and see if he couldn't bring a couple of the boys back with him; then there could be a rubber of whist. Mamma knew by experience exactly what that meant: she was to be alone for the remainder of the evening, and perhaps half the night. But perhaps The Jefful would wake with pain from her coming teeth, and need to be comforted; she might

even have a call from Bobboker, whose hearty suppers often gave him night-mare; so she might not have an utterly lonesome evening, after all.

And thus it was that the thread of mamma's existence, like that of millions of other mothers with loving, thoughtless husbands, was woven through the MORNING, NOON, AFTERNOON AND EVENING OF ONE DAY.

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